

Title Page

DEVELOPING READING STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH THE USE OF INTEGRATED READING/WRITING ACTIVITIES: A STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, for the degree of Doctor of
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Language, Literacies, Media and Drama Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. This thesis has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. Where use has been made of the results of other authors, they have been duly acknowledged in the text.

S. Bharuthram
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Abstract

Higher education in South Africa faces severe challenges due to the under preparedness of many students entering the system. Research (Perkins 1991; Pretorius 2000, 2005; Balfour 2002) has shown that many students who enter higher education do not have the required academic literacy knowledge and strategies to engage meaningfully with the relevant texts in their disciplines. A major obstacle to students' success is their limited reading strategies. A significantly large number of students are not able to read at the appropriate grade and/or age level. Yet, reading is one of the most important academic tasks encountered by students.

This thesis focuses on the use of reading strategy interventions together with integrated reading/writing activities to enhance reading comprehension. The study is located at the Durban University of Technology, using as participants the students who were registered on the first year extended Dental Technology programme in 2004. The interventions are implemented through an action research project. The piloting phase of the interventions reveals the need for an understanding of the students' backgrounds in, amongst others, their reading and writing practices, attitudes, approaches to learning, and motivational factors. Consequently, the action research project was conducted in parallel with an ethnographic inquiry into students' reading worlds and practices. Given that reading and writing are complementary processes whereby the enhancement of the one has a positive effect on the other, the ethnographic inquiry also explores students' attitudes and practices towards writing. Using the ideological model (Street 1984) and, in particular, the new literacy approach to teaching and learning as a framework for the thesis, I argue that the students' early childhood and schooling experiences of reading and writing impact on their current attitudes and practices. I further suggest that for children from disadvantaged backgrounds learning and retaining literacy is more difficult than for children from advantaged, middle class backgrounds.

The ethnographic inquiry involved a series of interviews with students, as well as a questionnaire to ascertain students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing. In addition, a questionnaire was designed for lecturers to obtain their attitudes and

practices towards reading and writing in their disciplines. A major finding of the ethnographic inquiry was that the majority of participants in the study come from a background that can be described as traditionally oral in the sense that it is one in which very little or no emphasis is placed on reading. For some participants story telling was a more common form of interaction or communication with the elders. Also, the majority of participants come from lower socio-economic backgrounds where the purchasing of reading materials is considered a luxury. In addition, for many of the English additional language students, their school environment and experiences were not adequate enough to foster the need for reading and/or any engagement in reading.

Based on my research, as well as the findings of other researchers, I argue that reading strategy interventions are essential in order to raise awareness and promote the use of reading strategies so as to enhance the learning (reading) process. The review of literature on reading development and the findings from the interviews indicate that the explicit teaching of reading strategies is essential for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (Heath 1983; Delpit 1986; Cope and Kalantzis 1993). To this end the action research component of the study was implemented through the explicit teaching of three reading strategies, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words in a text, and summarization. The focus of the intervention was on the process and on raising students' levels of metacognitive awareness. The approach is novel in two ways. First, via the process approach to reading the chosen reading strategies were initially taught independently to the students using the explicit explanation approach which involved scaffolded tasks involving explanations, modeling (using the think-aloud protocol), practice, and transfer exercises. Thereafter, using the cognitive apprenticeship approach, students were taught to use all three strategies simultaneously during reading. Second, discipline specific materials were used as reading sources during the interventions which were conducted with integrated reading/writing activities. Data was collected by means of a language proficiency pre-and post-test, a reading strategy pre-and post-test, worksheets, student reflective pieces, portfolios, and observations.

An analysis of the pre-and post-test data showed that the reading strategy interventions were highly successful. Students performed better in the reading strategy post-test than in the pre-test. Furthermore, their performance was better than that of a control group of

students who were registered for the first year mainstream programme and who wrote only the reading strategy post-test. A marked improvement was also noted in the language proficiency post-test. These results stress the need for the teaching of reading strategies through integrated reading and writing activities.

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PART I

READING COMPREHENSION DEVELOPMENT: CONTEXT, THEORY, AND ACCESS

CHAPTER 1: THE AIM AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This dissertation describes an action research project that involves the teaching of three reading strategies to twelve students studying at the Durban University of Technology (DUT)¹. Noting that action research is limited in its scope and applicability (referring as it does to a specific intervention within a specified space of time), I decided to extend the dimensions of my research to include an ethnographic account of the reading (and writing) behaviours of the same group of students. Throughout the thesis I have termed this the ethnographic inquiry into students' worlds and practices. Moreover, I felt that it was essential for researchers concerned with reading development to understand the reader-student as individuals, taking into consideration their reading and writing practices, approaches to learning, beliefs, language, and motivating factors. This necessitated the ethnographic inquiry into students' worlds and practices.

This chapter contextualises the study by discussing the literacy and reading levels among school goers in South Africa and at the Durban University of Technology where the study is conducted. Since this study is located broadly within the field of academic development I briefly trace changes that have occurred in academic development over the past ten years with a particular focus on the changes in the academic development programmes at the Durban University of Technology. This discussion provides the background for the study and is then followed by a presentation of my motivation for choosing this topic. Thereafter, the problems and issues investigated and the key questions raised as a result of these investigations are outlined. Finally, the structure through which these issues and questions are addressed is presented towards the end of the chapter.

¹ South Africa became a democratic state in 1994. Prior to that, within the framework of an apartheid system of government, higher education institutions were established for each race group. This led to a duplication of diplomas and degrees at neighbouring institutions. After 1994 the restructuring of higher education in South Africa became inevitable. In 1997, the government produced the *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa*. This was implemented through the *National Plan for Higher Education (2001)* which focused on the restructuring of higher education to promote sustainability, rationalization, and efficient and effect use of resources. Through a merger process the number of higher education institutions was reduced. Consequently, the M.L. Sultan Technikon (previously for the Indian sector of the population) was merged with its immediate neighbour Technikon Natal (previously for the White sector of the population) on 1 April 2002 to form the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT). More recently, such entities, created on the model of the former British polytechnics, have been classified as universities of technologies. Thus DIT is now known as the Durban University of Technology (DUT).

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 Literacy and reading in South Africa

The democratization of South Africa in 1994 brought about radical changes in education, the most significant of which was the integration of the previously separated education systems both at national and provincial levels. With a more equitable distribution of resources it was anticipated that all students in South Africa would have access to and receive the same learning opportunities². However, despite the changes made in the distribution of resources as well as in the national curriculum, the restructuring of administrative authorities and the revitalizing of educator training, not much impact was made in raising the national literacy rate or the levels of school literacy (Asmal 1999)³. The population census of October 2001⁴, when focussing on the population aged twenty years and above, showed that about 17.9% of the population had no education at all. About 16% have had some primary education, 30.8% have had some secondary education, and 20.4% completed Grade 12. Just 8.4% of the population had some form of post-matriculation education (*Statistics South Africa* 2003). These distributions are shown in Figure 1.1⁵.

² The Threshold Project (MacDonald 1990) which was conducted prior to 1994 showed that many schools in the rural areas were under-resourced. According to MacDonald (1990:ii) one of the aims of the Project was to "examine school-based learning experiences of the lower primary child, and to establish how these contribute to the difficulty of the change-over to English as a medium of instruction in Standard 3". Data was collected informally from 1985 to 1988. An in-depth ethnographic study was also carried out during the periods July to September 1988. Four rural schools were studied: two from Bophuthatswana, one in Northern Transvaal as well as a convent school in Florida. The Threshold Project (MacDonald 1990:103) which reported on the poor reading comprehension skills of the school children concluded that there was a need for a school-based reading or literature programme.

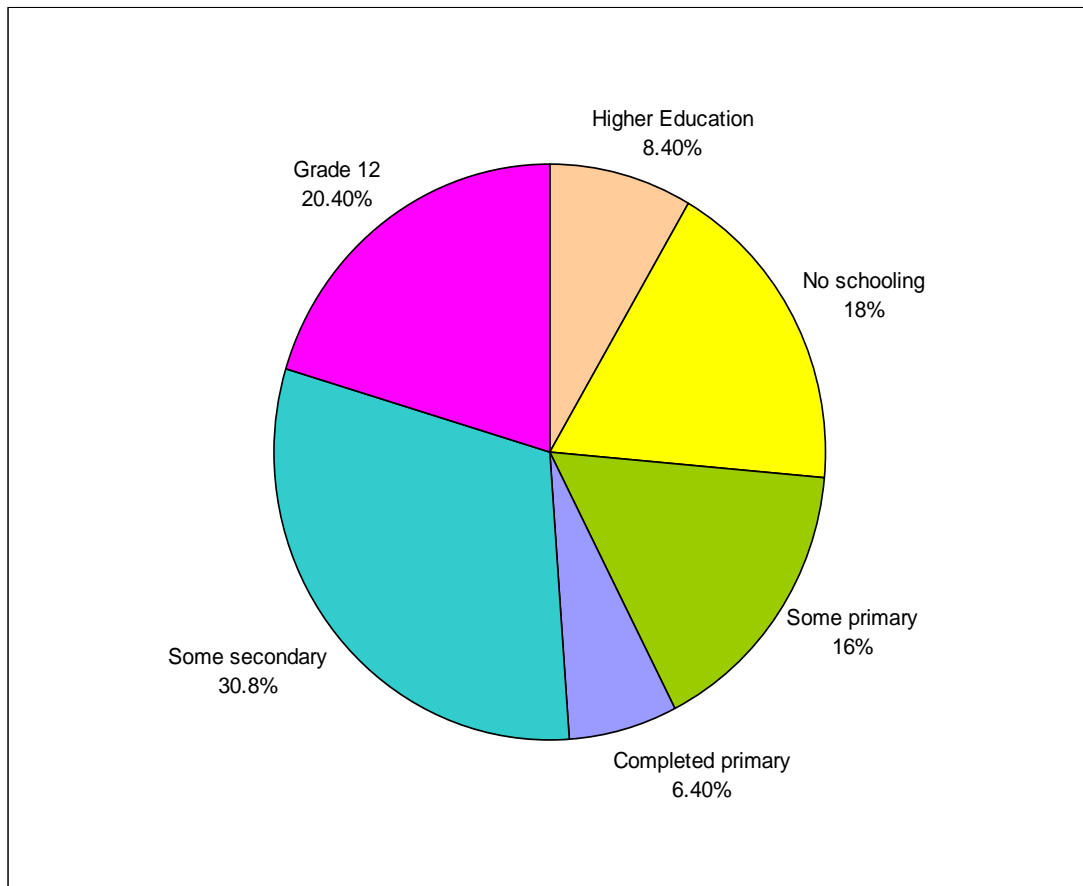
³ Disparities in terms of physical resources still exist. For example, of the 27 148 schools in the country, 12 257 (45%) were without electricity; 7409 (27%) without running water; 3 188 (11%) have no sanitation; and 17 907 (66%) have inadequate sanitation, that is, one toilet to thirty students (Pretorius 2002:vi).

⁴ The population of South Africa is estimated to be about 44.8 million. The province of Kwa Zulu-Natal has the largest population, that is, 9.4 million people (*Statistics South Africa* 2003).

⁵ The categories used in Figure 1.1 are explained.

'No schooling': includes people who had never been to school, as well as children in pre-school, Grade 0, and Grade 1 at the time of the census; 'Some primary': Grades 1-6 inclusive; 'Completed primary': Grade 7; 'Some secondary': Grades 8-11 inclusive; and 'Higher Education': any tertiary qualification, including certificates and diplomas of at least six months' full-time study or equivalent as well as degrees. In this report (unlike many other Statistics South Africa reports) this category includes people with a tertiary qualification without having completed secondary school (*Statistics South Africa* 2003:v).

Figure 1.1: Distribution of population age 20 years and above by highest level of education completed



(Statistics South Africa 2003)

The figures indicate that 34% (18%: no schooling; + 16%: some primary schooling) of South Africa's population are functionally illiterate, meaning that although they may have some basic skills in reading and writing they would not be able to perform successfully in occupations that require high levels of fluency in reading and writing.

In reporting the results on the literacy and basic education levels of South Africans aged fifteen years and over, Aitchison and Harley (2004:6) compared the 2001 and 1996 general population census (see Figure 1.2). They found that over the five-year period there was no decline in the fraction of the adult population that is classified as functionally illiterate (that is, have less than Grade 7 education). This made up

approximately 32% of the South African adult population. Therefore, the authors say that the functional literacy rate amongst the adult population is estimated at 68%. A possible reason for this pattern of relatively high level of adult illiteracy is that over the past years some children, especially in the rural areas, were receiving little or no general education. Aitchison (2001:25) states that the government does not seem to have adequate resources to assume complete responsibility for the alleviation of illiteracy. The same could be said now, in 2006.

Figure 1.2: Literacy and basic education levels of South Africans aged 15 years and over.

Level of education	1996 General population census	2001 General Population census
Full general education (Grade 9 and more)	13.1 million (50%)	15.8 million (52%)
Less than full general education (less than Grade 9)	13.2 million (50%)	14.6 million (48%)
Less than Grade 7	8.5 million (32%)	9.6 million (32%)
No schooling	4.2 million (16%)	4.7 million (16%)

(adapted from Aitchison and Harley 2004:3)

In a keynote address the then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal⁶ (1999), reported that many pupils in the rural areas who enter Grade 8, read at Grade 2 level. He further stated that the matriculation (Grade 12) examination failure rates reached the proportions of a national disaster. In June 2000, Minister Asmal promised to eradicate illiteracy in South Africa within five years and a few days later this promise was packaged by the Department of Education as one for “breaking the back of illiteracy” (Miller 2005). It was in this context that the South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI) was launched in 2000.

For over a decade various attempts have been made by the South African government to improve the literacy levels in the country through various literacy and reading campaigns (see later discussion), by upgrading schools that were previously under-resourced and by providing educator training. Yet, there are still reports in the media on

⁶ Democratic South Africa's first Minister of Education was Sibusiso Bhengu (1994-1998). He was succeeded by Kadar Asmal (1999-2003). Naledi Pandor as appointed as Minister in 2004.

the low literacy rates in South Africa⁷. It was reported in *'The Teacher'* (April 2005) that in July 2001 more than a third of South Africans of sixteen years and older were illiterate (Macfarlane 2005). *The National Census* of 2001 found a significant increase in the number of totally unschooled adults by more than half a million people (Harley 2003). In the province of KwaZulu-Natal alone, it is "conservatively estimated that 22% of adults have little or no formal schooling, leaving 1.7 million illiterate" (Macfarlane 2005:6). In 1995 the Premier of the Province, Sibusiso Ndebele, and MEC⁸ for Education, Ina Cronjé, declared 'a state of emergency' regarding the illiteracy rates. At the Year of Adult Literacy conference which was held in KwaZulu-Natal in 2005 many delegates reported that "10 years of democracy have done little to reduce literacy" (Macfarlane 2005:6).

Since 1995 and in response to the national crisis, many policies have been developed or revised by the South African Government to shape reading and literacy in the country either directly or indirectly. Some of these include the *National Education Policy Act* (No. 27 of 1996), the *South African Schools Act* (No. 84 of 1996), the *Policy for Early Childhood Development* (Department of Education 1996), the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (Department of Education 2002) and the *Adult Basic Education and Training Act* (No. 52 of 2000). However, Baatjies (2003:5) argues that while reading and literacy education are integral parts of these policies, there are no specific statements referring directly to the development of reading. South Africa does not have a reading policy, though certain provincial departments of Education have developed policies in the recent past. In lieu of the reading and literacy levels in the country, and arising out of some of the above-mentioned policies, a number of literacy and reading initiatives were put into place by the Department of Education since 1995. Some of these include the Ithuteng "Ready to Learn" Campaign in 1996, the *South African National Literacy Initiative* (SANLI) in 1999, the *Masifunde Sonke* Campaign in 2000, and the *Centre for the Book* which was launched in 2003. Other initiatives include *Read, Educate, Adjust and Develop* (READ), *The Molteno Project*⁹, and the *Early Learning*

⁷ South African children were proclaimed to be the "dunces of Africa". This formed the headlines in a weekend paper, the *Sunday Times* (Pretorius 2000a). The article reported on a comparative study of literacy and numeracy rates. Primary school children from twelve counties in Africa participated in the study. The South African children performed poorly in comparison to the other children.

⁸ MEC: Member of the Executive Council for Education of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government.

⁹ The *Molteno Project* which commenced in 1974 as a project of Rhodes University, South Africa is now an autonomous body. The *Molteno Project* can be accessed on www.ru.ac.za/affiliates/molteno/.

Resource Unit (ELRU)¹⁰. Some of the above-mentioned campaigns and initiatives failed for various reasons and have been discontinued. For example, the Ithuteng “*Ready to Learn*” Campaign, which was launched by former Education Minister Sibusiso Bhengu on 11 February 1996 to commemorate President Mandela’s release from prison, was launched to provide Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes through mass delivery. The campaign targeted ninety thousand adults in the country and had a once-off budget of R50 million (Baatjies 2003). This campaign did not reach its target. Among other reasons, the campaign failed because it was poorly organized, lacked a national plan, and most of the provinces did not have the necessary administrative support structures to carry the campaign forward.

The *South African National Literacy Initiative* (SANLI) was launched by the Ministry of Education in 2000, targeting 3.3 million adult learners. SANLI was initiated also to reduce adult illiteracy and to encourage the development of a reading nation. SANLI had a staff complement of about twelve and operated as a special unit alongside the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) sub-directorate. Funding was difficult to come by as donors saw the plan as impossible to achieve. A year later the SANLI staff complement was reduced to one person with funding from the United Kingdom’s Department of International Development (DFID) unit. When funding from DFID ceased, the South African government then issued tenders in 2003 for local non-governmental organizations to manage the project in three provinces only, that is, Northern Cape, Western Cape and the Free State. Project Literacy (South Africa’s leading Adult Basic Education Delivery Agency) won the tenders. However, funding was still a major battle and the Project wound down in November 2004 (Miller 2005:6). Nothing has replaced either of the initiatives.

The *Masifunde Sonke* – “Building a Nation of Readers” Campaign was a national reading Campaign launched by Kadar Asmal, the previous Minister of Education, in 2000, targeting the whole of South Africa. To this end, 2001 was declared as the ‘Year of the Reader’ which aimed at motivating the entire nation to read. The mission of

¹⁰ The *Early Resource Learning Unit* (ELRU) is an Early Childhood Development Centre in South Africa whose mission includes promoting and providing access to knowledge and skills and affirming and harnessing the potential of diversity (online: accessed 2005). The ELRU is involved in providing training programmes for educators, community development, materials development, and research in the area of early childhood development. In addition, the ELRU supports South African books for children in their different official languages. ELRU can be accessed on <http://www.elru.co.za>.

Masifunde Sonke was to build a sustainable culture of reading that affirms South African languages, history, literature, values and development (Pretorius 2002:193). In addition, *Masifunde Sonke's* mandate was not only to organise the reading events, functions or initiatives, but to offer itself as the mother body or network centre for reading initiatives that were organised differently and separately by other organisations (Asmal 2001). This campaign, which was originally located within SANLI, was poorly advertised and was unknown except by those directly involved in the campaign. In addition, funding was a major setback as only R51 000 was allocated to this campaign in 2001. The failure of the *Masifunde Campaign* is not surprising since such a paltry sum of money was set aside for a national project. When one compares the amount of R51 000 to the figure of R300 million allocated for the development of teaching in mathematics and science, it is indicative of the little importance given to the development of reading by the Department of Education.

Some initiatives mentioned earlier that still exist and that have generated greater awareness include *READ* and the *Centre for the Book*. The *READ* Education Trust which was founded by Cynthia Hugo in 1979 was registered as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in South Africa in 1979¹¹. *READ* is funded by aid agencies and the private sector. *READ* works closely with the Ministry of Education, providing resources and educator training to a number of educational institutions. *READ* is one of the most prominent and largest literacy programmes in South Africa. It has thirteen centres throughout the country. Its aim is to train educators, provide schools with teaching materials, and to assist with the development of curricula. Some of their projects include *Readathon*, *Rally to Read*, and *Learning for Living*. The *Centre for the Book* is a specialist unit of the National Library of South Africa. Its vision is to promote a South African culture of reading and writing by promoting the writing, publishing, reading, marketing, and distribution of South African books in all South African languages. The *Centre for the Book* receives funding from the Department of Arts and Culture through the National Library. It also relies on donor funding (Anderson, [online] accessed 2006). The *Isizalo – First words in Print* project of the *Centre for the Book* is one of the very few non-didactic programmes. It ensures that very young children (zero to six years of age)

¹¹ *READ* can be accessed at www.read.org.za. *READ* programmes use an internationally accepted resource-based approach that has been adapted and refined for use in South Africa. It is suitable to outcomes-based methodology and to the needs of additional language students and educators (online, 2005).

have access to mother-tongue storybooks. Since 2003, it has provided 40 000 disadvantaged families with eight South African picture and storybooks. These books are written in the family's dominant home language (Anderson, [online] accessed 2006). Despite these initiatives the reading and literacy levels in South Africa are still problematic and impact negatively on higher education¹². Over the past few years, especially following the release of the Grade 12 (Matriculation) examination results, there has been a spread of articles that report on the poor literacy levels of students about to enter tertiary education. For example, as recently as in 2006, *The Sunday Times* reported that academics from South African universities are aware that many Grade 12 students entering universities are barely able to read and write (Govender and Naidu 2006). This point was reiterated by the Vice-Chancellor of North West University who said "...the bad news for universities is that we see a worsening in the literacy levels and reading and writing skills of all students" (Govender and Naidu 2006:1). Horne (2002:43), from a firm of consultants on literacy and communication abilities, conducted a study at a technikon in KwaZulu-Natal with twenty-eight third year Engineering students. He found that these students were functioning well below the level expected of them (see Figure 1.3) at tertiary level.

Figure 1.3: Functional skills of third year Engineering students at a Technikon

	Functional skills level in English			
	Below Grade 8	Grade 8/9	Grade 10/11	Grade 12
Number of students	23	4	1	0
Percentage	82%	14%	4%	0%

At the South African Academic Development Conference held at the Durban University of Technology in November 2005, Prem Naidoo from the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) was quoted as saying that approximately half of all students at South African tertiary education institutions have dropped out in the past five years. In a study conducted by the HEQC it was found that "out of 120 000 students who registered

¹² The low levels of reading abilities of students entering higher education is also a problem experienced in other parts of the world. For example, Falk-Ross (2002:278) says that a "significant number of U.S. first-year college students commence their studies with less than adequate reading comprehension strategies and enter developmental reading classes or attend assistant labs".

in 2000 for various three-year higher education qualifications, only 22% graduated, 50% dropped out and just 28% are still in the system five years later” (Hlela and Zulu 2005:8). This places a heavy financial burden on the government. Mamalia (2001:1), based on data from the South African Department of Education, reported a loss of approximately R1.3 billion a year.

Horne (2002) further states that numerous studies in which he has been involved have shown that pupils are not on the level expected of them in a specific grade. His findings reveal that many matriculants (Grade 12 students) who cannot read or write possess the literacy levels of Grade 4 pupils. This problem is compounded by the fact that reading is only taught in the foundation phases (Grades 1 to 3) of schooling with an emphasis on decoding skills. According to Baatjies (2003), it is incorrectly assumed that students acquire basic literacy by the end of Grades 3 and 4 and if students experience problems in later grades, then it is regarded as a “language” problem and as not a “reading” problem. However, Matjila and Pretorius (2004) found otherwise. In their study they gave Grade 8 students two reading tests¹³ in Setswana which was the students’ primary language and in English which was the language of teaching and learning (LoTL). They found that the students read more slowly in Setswana than in English, suggesting that students are not able to practice their reading skills because of inadequate exposure to books. In addition, Matjila and Pretorius (2004) argue that their results suggest that knowledge of one’s home language is not sufficient for reading skills. The authors also found that the reading levels of the students in both languages were far lower than their maturational levels. In fact, students were reading at about a Grade 3-4 level¹⁴. The problem of the students’ poor reading skills in primary schools is thus carried over into secondary schools. For instance, in the Western Cape it was reported that “only 35% of Grade 6 pupils could perform adequately at that level in literacy, while only 15% could perform adequately in numeracy tests”. The same group of students were assessed again in Grade 8. It was found that again only 35% were found to be able to read and write at Grade 8 level (Yutar 2004:9). These students then enter higher education and

¹³ A total of eighty-eighty students participated in the study, with a mean age of 14.5 years. The same expository text and types of assessment items were used for both tests, that is, the Setswana and English tests. The test consisted of a reading comprehension passage which tested students’ vocabulary knowledge and inferencing abilities. In addition, a cloze test was included to assess the students’ “use of language context as a strategy for understanding what is read” (Matjila and Pretorius 2004:7-9). The students’ reading rate was also measured to determine at what speed they were reading in each language.

¹⁴ About 60% of the students obtained below 50% comprehension levels when they read (61% students in Setswana and 60% students in English) (Matjila and Pretorius 2004:12-13).

struggle to cope academically. Hence, students with reading problems get caught in a “negative cycle of failed reading outcomes and academic underperformance” (Pretorius 2002:189).

The above discussion highlights the low literacy levels and the reading situation in South Africa. The lack of a legislated reading policy, the numerous failed literacy and reading campaigns and initiatives, and the misconception that the low literacy levels are as a direct result of the poor language proficiency of the students without any recognition to reading, are of grave concern given that reading is fundamental to the learning process. To re-iterate, the reading problem in South Africa tends to be masked by the language problems (Pretorius 2002:174). Many educators attribute the difficulties that students experience in reading comprehension to limited language proficiency, the underlying assumption being that language proficiency and reading ability are ‘the same thing’. Research by Hacquebord (1994) has shown that improving language proficiency does not readily improve reading comprehension. Rather, it is attention to reading that improves reading skill, during which language proficiency also improves (Elley 1991; Mbise 1993). At this point I echo the question posed by Pretorius (2002:189), that is, “What is being done about reading at tertiary level?” One way of assisting students who enter tertiary education to cope with reading materials in their academic disciplines, is by raising students’ awareness of reading strategies and by implementing reading strategy interventions within the curriculum. This I attempt to accomplish through an integrated well-designed action research intervention described in Chapter 5. Having discussed certain aspects of literacy and reading in South Africa, it is also important to understand the particular context within which the participants of my research are located, that is, at the Durban University of Technology.

1.1.2 Literacy and reading at the Durban University of Technology

From the experience of lecturing in Communication and Academic Literacy over the past nine years at M.L. Sultan Technikon and Technikon Natal (now DUT), I have observed that many first year students, especially English Additional Language (henceforth EAL) students, come under-prepared for the academic literacy requirements that typically

characterize tertiary coursework in the medium of English^{15, 16}. This could be due to several factors, for example, linguistic or cultural differences; inadequate/inappropriate educational preparation; and a lack of perception as to the demands of tertiary life. In my experience most staff link these problems to a linguistic deficit which, in fact, can be a major hurdle for many EAL students.

An investigation conducted by Starkey *et al.* (1999) at ex-Technikon Natal has confirmed that the general language levels of the majority of first year students remain inadequate and a considerable number of students would be at risk of failing if no interventions are provided. These results are particularly important as they highlight the level of preparedness of the students entering DUT. The results obtained by Starkey *et al.* (1999) were based on two tests: the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which was conducted in 1998 and the Placement Test in English for Educational Purposes (PTEEP) which was conducted in 1999. The IELTS¹⁷ is a British test and was chosen because it is accepted and recognized by most academic institutions in Australia, Britain, Canada, Africa and New Zealand as the most objective and scientific means of establishing the language abilities of students choosing to enter the institution for the first time. The PTEEP¹⁸ was devised by the Alternative Admissions Research Project (AARP) Committee at the University of Cape Town. It aims to test students' levels of academic literacy in English and incorporates a combination of teaching, modelling, and practice elements to alleviate difficulties experienced by disadvantaged students in taking traditional test types (Starkey *et al.* 1999:4).

¹⁵ Similar observations were also made by researchers from other Higher Education Institutions in South Africa, for example, Perkins (1991), University of Transkei; Balfour (2002), University of KwaZulu-Natal; Pretorius (2000), University of Pretoria; and Dreyer and Nel (2003), Potchefstroom University.

¹⁶ English is the medium of instruction in most educational institutions in South Africa. In relation to language rights, use, and development, the *Constitution of South Africa* (Act No. 108, 1996) specifies eleven official languages. These are IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, English, Afrikaans, SeSotho, Northern Sotho, SeTswana, XiTsonga, SiSwati, TshiVenda, and IsiNdebele. Sign Language is an unofficial twelfth language.

¹⁷ The IELTS test has band levels which categorise students according to their overall performance on the test. These range from 1 (non-user) to 9 (expert user). The minimum score required for acceptance at an English medium institution range from 5.5 to 7.5. If students are admitted with scores of 5 to 6.5, then they should be expected to complete a language course or its equivalent (Starkey *et al.* 1999:3).

¹⁸ The PTEEP results consist of four levels: less than 30% (highly unlikely to succeed in regular curriculum. Students require foundation programme); 30% - 40% (likely to experience difficulties. Students should be placed on reduced curriculum); 40% - 50% (likely to experience some difficulties, students most likely to benefit from EAP courses); and 50% or more (unlikely to experience difficulties as a result of academic literacy related problems) (Yeld 2001:5).

A total of one hundred and fifty one first year students completed the IELTS test in August 1998. In the reading module the results showed that 53% of the students achieved below Band 5.5 and 84% below Band 6.5. When the results for the EAL group were considered separately it was found that 66% achieved below Band 5.5 and 90% below Band 6.5. The authors point out that if the results were extrapolated to the entire first year level, then 60% of the first year students registered in 1998 were functioning below Band 6.5. It is interesting to note that the students generally achieved a higher band in the speaking module which tests general oral competence than in any of the other modules. A year later (1999) the PTEEP test was administered to a total of one thousand nine hundred and twenty students. The average percentage scored was 45%. The majority of students obtained less than 50%. According to Starkey *et al.* (1999:5) the results are an indication that students' performance would be adversely affected by their lack of academic literacy and language skills.

Since the study by Starkey *et al.* (1999) circumstances relating to entrance requirements and recruitment have not changed much. Many students come into tertiary education differently-prepared to cope with the demands placed on them in their disciplines. A clear indication of this was obtained in 2003 when all first entry students from the four faculties¹⁹ were required to write a language test to determine their proficiency in the English language. This test is called the TELP placement test and is part of the Tertiary Educational Linkage Project²⁰, and has been designed by academics from different higher education institutions in South Africa²¹.

The language test is divided into two sections: multiple choice questions (MCQs) and constructed questions. In 2003 a total of three thousand four hundred and thirty eight students²² from the Steve Biko²³ and M.L. Sultan campuses of DUT wrote the test. While the overall pass rate for the MCQs was 80.5%, the pass rate for the constructed

¹⁹ DUT has four faculties: Arts, Commerce, Health Sciences, and Science and Engineering.

²⁰ TELP is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project.

²¹ The main aim of the language test is to identify students who are likely to experience academic difficulties in future situations in which language will be an important, but not the sole, variable. It is based, therefore, on a notion of language-as-vehicle rather than language-as-target (Yeld 2001). At DUT the test is administered by the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) in conjunction with the academic departments. The test is discussed further in Chapter 5.

²² This total includes both EFL and EAL students. There is no record available on how many of the students were EFL or EAL students.

²³ After the merger the Technikon Natal was renamed the Steve Biko Campus of DUT while the M.L. Sultan Technikon retained its name but became the M.L. Sultan Campus of DUT.

questions was 37.7%. This result indicates that while students are able to answer literal questions, they do not have the competence in the English language that requires them to construct sentences in a cohesive and coherent manner. Their lack of proficiency in the English language which is the medium of instruction, and their limited reading ability, results in many students struggling to cope academically, leading to high attrition and low throughput rates. The results of the test can be explained in terms of the distinction made by Cummins (1980, 1981, and 2000) between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). CALP involves the use of a more context-reduced language associated with written language and with more formal aspects of the classroom. According to Cummins (1981) academic literacies are context reduced. For successful meaning making, writers and readers are required to share a significant amount of background knowledge. Therefore, CALP, which is context reduced, is needed for the production and interpretation of academic texts. On the other hand, BICS is more context-embedded in the sense that meaning making can often be found within the interactional context. This implies that even if a student has acquired a high level of proficiency in a language, the student is unlikely to succeed if the proficiency is mainly BICS proficiency. Students need CALP to succeed academically. While many students at DUT have BICS, they lack CALP, which as discussed above, is essential for success in higher education²⁴.

The intake of students who are differently prepared for higher education is not a problem that is unique to the DUT. Similar findings were recorded by studies at other South African institutions, for example, in investigations at the University of Transkei by Perkins (1991), and at the University of Natal by Steele (1993) and Balfour (2002). Perkins (1991) reported that in 1989 students who attended the Student Orientation Programme at the University of Transkei were given the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test to establish “the degree to which English language and/or reading comprehension problems exist in first year students. It was found that only 13.8% had the reading skills necessary to comprehend their textbooks, and only 26% were unable to cope without assistance” (Perkins 1991:232). Balfour (2002)²⁵ in an analysis of students' performance

²⁴ Other studies within the South African context by Balfour (2002), McKenna (2004), and Pretorius (2002) also made similar observations, that is, many students entering Higher Education Institutions in South Africa lack CALP.

²⁵ Balfour (2002, Report 7) in an analysis of students' performance in English proficiency at ex-Natal University in South Africa (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal), administered a series of English Proficiency Exercises (EPE) to students from different faculties. The purpose of the 'exercises' was to

in English proficiency concluded that while students are conversational communicators in English, they possess partial language or genre awareness and that students' reading skills needed urgent attention. In a longitudinal study based at technikons mainly in the province of Gauteng, Horne (2002:43) found that there was a steady decline in the functional literacy levels of Grade 12 EAL students who registered at these technikons. Their results are shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: Grade 12 EAL school-leavers applying for admission to technikons – mainly Gauteng. N = 7534

Year	Number assessed	Functionally literate, that is, Grade 8 or above
1990	568	51%
1991	490	35%
1992	899	33%
1993	770	31%
1994	930	28%
1995	1314	25%
1996	520	24%
1997	434	22%
1998	621	20%
1999	537	19%
2000	451	18%

(Horne 2002:43)

The consistent decline over successive years in the percentage of functionally literate students in Figure 1.4 is cause for concern. In 1995, the authors also administered a standardised English literacy test²⁶ to seven hundred and sixty six Grade 12 school-leavers. These students had applied successfully to be trained as educators in a province in the northern part of South Africa. The results are presented in Figure 1.5 overleaf.

collect information to assess the relationship between needs identified by the corporate sector and the needs of the students' 'actual' language abilities. For the first year students generic EPEs were used. For senior levels of undergraduate study students wrote context specific EPEs. About 30 to 40 students per faculty participated in the study. The aim of the EPE was not to assess achievement, but to determine students' areas of language strength and weaknesses depending on L1/L2/L3 or foreign language usage of English.

²⁶ The test is called ELSA (English Literacy Skills Assessment). It is a standardized, group measuring instrument, designed and developed in South Africa by the Hough and Horne Consultancy (Johannesburg). The test's predictive validity is 84% and its reliability 0.86 (Horne 2002:41).

Figure 1.5: Grade 12 school-leavers after successfully applying to a training college

	FUNCTIONAL SKILLS LEVEL – ENGLISH			
	Below Grade 8	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
No. of students	728	23	8	7
Percentage	95%	3%	1%	1%

(Horne 2002:43)

The students as presented above in Figure 1.5 qualified as educators at the end of 1998. The vast majority are teaching English and/or using English to teach content subjects.

In the case of the DUT, I have noted that while importance is given to improving the writing practices of students, very little or no attention is paid on developing their reading practices. Further, within the South African context, most of the Academic Development programmes focus on improving the writing practices of students in isolation of any attention given to their reading practices. According to Balfour (2002:168),

....students have a serious problem with comprehension of written material in English. Such a problem is serious because this skill is vital for processing information at university level. It is for this reason that a greater focus on reading skills should be included in future English language courses at the University.

Balfour reached this conclusion after he found that students performed worst in a reading test²⁷. Young *et al.* (2001:67) state that students' weak reading scores have serious implications for the following reasons:

- A poor ability to read and digest course material impacts negatively on students' performance and on their self-esteem.
- An inability to read affects students' ability to follow written instructions, be these in the form of essay questions or examinations.
- An inability to read texts impacts negatively on the students' ability to model their own writing on them – both conceptually, linguistically and structurally.
- For this reason an inability to read – and to model one's own writing production on what one reads – severely affects students' chances of sustaining their own language development once they complete the course.

²⁷ Using the IELTS test, Young *et al.* (2001: 64) found that their students (eighty-eighty first year University of Natal Human Science students) scored better in the speaking test, followed by writing, listening and then reading. The tests were given to students who had registered for an English Language Course.

Jardine (1986:58) in his investigation of the characteristics of the academically vulnerable university student in Southern African found that,

The student's skill in 'linguaging' – or rather his lack of it, whether it was in the receptive or productive mode, was often identified as the most serious hindrance to the student's progress at university.

Thereafter he begins his discussion with reading (before listening and writing), stating that “.....I consider it the most important language skill required for a university degree – after all we do still ‘read’ for a degree” (Jardine 1986:59).

Moreover, it is well known that in the process of acquiring knowledge, apart from the notes and guidance during lectures, the student is expected to supplement these by consulting additional texts. These texts not only reinforce the teachings in the classroom, but also broaden the student's knowledge base. Students must be able to understand the texts they read to achieve academic success. Consequently, students who experience difficulties in reading will be handicapped in acquiring knowledge and in succeeding academically (Pretorius 1996:36). Further, the level of reading required in higher education is much more sophisticated than in school, and in a typical course load, students need to read a range of different books (genres)²⁸. As pointed out by Pretorius (1996), comprehending these texts is crucial for academic success. The complex nature of most academic texts does not make the students' tasks any much easier coupled with the fact that many students come into higher education with their own literacy experiences, which may either advance or hamper the acquisition of their discipline specific literacies. In this regard, I draw on the work by Thesen (1998:39)²⁹ who discusses the complexity of texts in terms of an analysis of texts from three levels: the first level (text) involves description – the *what* of linguistic analysis; level two, is the *how* of meaning making, that is, interpretation; and level three engages in *why*, that is, explanations and implications thereof. In acknowledging the difficult nature of texts, Grabe (1988:64) says that an important part of the reading process is the student's

²⁸ Studies by Lockett (1997) and Balfour (2002) also acknowledge that it is a requirement at tertiary level for students to display a range of sophisticated analytical and interpretative skills in reading and writing.

²⁹ Thesen (1998:37-38) adapted Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional conception of discourse which was based on Halliday's systemic functional analysis of language which explores the relationship between text and context. The model consists of three layers (text, social process and social practice) which are embedded into each other. The inner layer (text) pertains to the grammar of the language, for example, text structure, vocabulary, and cohesion. The middle layer (social process) involves the way people make sense of the text based on common-sense procedures. The third layer (social practices) involves peoples' beliefs about what makes sense in a particular society.

ability to recognize text genres and various distinct text types. He indicates that “the linguistic elements of the text combine interactively to help create the ‘textuality’ (that is, what makes a text a text as opposed to a collection of individual sentences that must be processed by the reader”. In addition to text level difficulties that students may experience, Pretorius (2002:169) argues that reading constitutes the very process through which learning occurs. Rose (2004:93) holds a similar view and argues that “the ability to read with comprehension and to learn from reading is the foundation for most other activities in schooling”. Yet in most academic development programmes little or no attention is paid to the reading process or the relevant strategy training required in assisting students to achieve success.

Due to the above-mentioned limitations in programmes involved in developing the academic literacy practices of students, and the importance of reading in achieving academic success, the influence of reading strategies on reading comprehension seems to be an important area of research even if it has hitherto been neglected.

1.1.3 Academic development at the Durban University of Technology

This section traces briefly the changes in academic development at DUT since 1997 when I began working at the institution. This discussion is necessary, as my research is located broadly within the field of academic development work and more narrowly within the field of the development of academic literacy. This discussion also shows how theoretical understandings and pedagogy changed with the advancing literature in the field of academic literacy. However, it must be noted that while I make reference to certain concepts and approaches in this section, these will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Over the last decade academic development in the form of student development has undergone significant curriculum changes nationally. During the period 1991 to approximately 1998 student development at the ex-Natal Technikon took the form of English Second Language tutorials³⁰. The tutorials were voluntary and while students were encouraged to attend them, attendance was very erratic (McKenna and Rawlinson

³⁰ Other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa also ran language tutorials for students, for example, the University of Cape Town (Moore *et al.* 1998:13).

1994). Since the tutorials were attended mostly by Black students³¹, they felt stigmatized³². The focus of the course was 'remedial' English. The content consisted mostly of generic materials in the form of worksheets which were designed for use by students across the curriculum. The use of generic material across the curriculum is a positivist skills based approach to teaching or as Street (1984) calls it "the autonomous model" of literacy (*c.f.* Chapter 2).

Since 1997, when I joined the ex-M.L. Sultan Technikon as a lecturer in the Department of Communication, all first entry students had to register for a module in Communication. In addition to the content lectures, the course included two language tutorials and two content tutorials per week. In the language tutorials students were given generic worksheets that focused on structural grammar, for example, filling in the missing verbs, and prepositions. The content tutorials helped reinforce the content of the lectures, for example, writing memos, reports, and the minutes of meetings. Students were often given exercises to complete which lecturers would mark focusing on the structure of the students' written exercises in addition to looking for surface errors. No developmental feedback was given. During 1997, at M.L. Sultan Technikon, language tutorials³³ were also run by the academic development sector, which was called the Educational Development Division. These tutorials were run for departments that requested assistance. Many departments felt that their students needed language interventions. The thinking then was that if students had a problem with their language, then this language problem needed to be 'fixed' and it was the job of the 'academic development people' to 'fix' this problem. In the Educational Development Division, as in the case of Natal Technikon and the Department of Communication (of the M.L. Sultan Technikon), the focus was on structural grammar and spelling rather than language use and even when there was a shift towards using 'discipline specific material', the aim was to develop grammatical proficiency. Christie (1993) terms this the "Received Tradition". The implication of the "Received Tradition" is that if students experience problems in

³¹ The authors do not give the percentage of Black students that attended the language tutorials but from my working in a neighbouring institution it can be estimated that about 80 - 90% of the students were African.

³² Other higher education institutions in South Africa were also experiencing similar problems. For example, Lanham *et al.* (1995:37) in their discussion of academic development support at universities say that "the attitude of black students towards attempts to remedy directly the problems of English as communication, has generally been to disregard them, even contempt".

³³ Language tutorials were also run in ADP at other institutions, for example, at the University of Natal (Personal Communication: E. Mgqwashu) and the University of Durban Westville (Personal Communication: P. Mankowski).

meeting mainstream expectations, then such problems can be solved by improving their language proficiency in an add-on English classroom (McKenna 2004).

During 1997 and 1998 the language interventions at Natal Technikon developed to become a credit-bearing annual academic course, called English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The course consisted of four lecture periods a week. Students who performed badly on the PTEEP test were registered for this course. During this stage there was a move away from teaching surface language structures to teaching academic skills. In 1998, at the M.L. Sultan Technikon, a course called “Core Curriculum”³⁴ was introduced. All students had to attend Core Curriculum where they learned academic skills, such as study techniques, time management, skimming, and scanning. The belief associated with this type of teaching is that students lacked academic skills and these skills could be acquired in add-on EAP or Core Curriculum classes and transferred to the mainstream courses. In retrospect, literacy was still viewed as a set of skills and thus we were still functioning within the positivist paradigm using the autonomous model (*c.f.* Chapter 2). The lack of transfer of the skills taught continued to present a problem and despite the EAP/Core Curriculum interventions, mainstream lecturers often commented to academic development staff that there were little (if any) improvement in their students’ work³⁵. As a result, staff began to question their practices and assumptions.

During this period (that is, 1998), in both technikons, the focus shifted to writing with emphasis on inculcating students into an academic writing genre which was assumed to be the same across all disciplines and separated from the subject content material. Although this was a change from the more conventional language teaching, it was done in a fairly unreflective and unconscious manner. There was no discussion on the value of what students were being taught (for example, when teaching referencing) or the ideologies that underpinned them (for example, when teaching hedging³⁶). When reflecting on the process, McKenna (2004) states that the assumption was that the rules of academic language use were neutral and while we tried to empower students with the

³⁴ “Core Curriculum” was the name given for the add-on course, stemming from the fact that the academic skills to be taught were ‘core’ skills of every discipline. In other words, students needed these ‘core’ skills to succeed academically and these ‘core’ skills should be integrated into the curriculum.

³⁵ This feedback was given to CHED staff by mainstream lecturers and often was discussed in CHED meetings.

³⁶ Hedging is when one avoids making a definite statement or decision. For example, in an academic essay students could be taught to write “it appears to be....” or “one could imply that.....” rather than being definite and writing “it is.....”.

“rules of use” there was no discussion as to why these rules existed or whose interests they served. The cultural, social, and economic environment in which language is embedded was ignored.

In 1999 EAP at the Natal Technikon was renamed academic literacy (AL). I joined this team in 2001. In 2002, the two technikons merged to become the Durban University of Technology with the two academic development departments merging to become one department: the Department of Integrated Learning Development. In this period there was an abundance of literature on AL in our Department and many workshops and discussions were held on the shifting notions of literacy and academic literacy. This brought about a gradual change in mindsets, moving away from the autonomous model of literacy towards the ideological model. The gradual changes in our theoretical understandings are reflected in the changes made in our pedagogy. For example, while we taught students how to reference we avoided highlighting plagiarism as the only issue, rather we discussed with students the importance of referencing and the benefits referencing might have for their work. In 2003 we changed our name to the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) with some staff (including myself) still largely involved in student development.

Since 2003 AL has been integrated into the mainstream curriculum arising from the changing notions of AL and awareness that an add-on approach is ineffective. AL interventions work best when they are meaningful to students and one way of making interventions meaningful is to use an integrated approach³⁷ rather than an add-on approach. It must be noted that this development was not only restricted to DUT, but also part of a national/international development in AL. For example, Quinn (1999) from Rhodes University, South Africa, and Rose³⁸ (online) from the University of Sydney, Australia argue that academic literacy can only be achieved by engaging with the discipline content. In their approach at DUT, CHED staff work very closely with mainstream lecturers in designing their materials. Instruction is overt in helping students to acquire the norms and expectations of their discipline. This is accomplished by using

³⁷ In this thesis an ‘integrated approach’ refers to embedding the teaching of reading and writing within the ways that particular academic disciplines use language. This understanding of an ‘integrated approach’ was also used by Jacobs (online: accessed 2005).

³⁸ Rose (online) further suggests that reading strategy teaching should be built into the normal teaching programmes across the curriculum. Apart from covering the curriculum content, educators would be providing students with the strategies required to cope with reading and writing tasks.

mainstream texts, lecture notes and assignments. The assessment criteria used in grading assignments and tasks are also made more explicit to students through assessment criteria rubrics. When working with students on their assignments, students go through the process of writing drafts and re-drafts on which they are given constructive and developmental feedback, which they use to improve on their work. It is within this context that my study is located. However, what appears lacking is a focus on reading strategies, together with integrated reading/writing activities. Further rationale and motivation for the study is provided in the next section.

1.2 Providing the rationale and motivation for the study

Over the past two decades there has been much written in the literature about the importance of reading and the importance of teaching students different reading strategies to improve their comprehension (Grabe 1991; DuBoulay 1999; Falk-Ross 2002). Reading is one of the most important academic tasks encountered by students. In fact, reading is the essence of all formal education as “literacy in academic settings exists within the context of a massive amount of print information” (Grabe 1991:389) and access to this information is obtained primarily through reading (Pretorius 1996:36). At tertiary level students often are confronted with a large number of texts and textbooks that they have to read independently. Reading at this level requires much more than just the ability to be able to identify written words in a text (that is, decoding information). Levine *et al.* (2000:1) state that “the ability to read academic texts is considered one of the most important skills that university students of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to acquire”. According to Daneman (1991), many readers may have the ability to decode texts easily, but are not able to understand what they have decoded. Further, Geisler (1994:32) says that most often the linguistic features in texts do not make them easy to read, thereby presenting additional difficulties for students. At tertiary level students are expected to be able to comprehend what they read so that they can analyse, criticise, evaluate and synthesize information from various sources. In contrast, in many secondary schools, students are exposed to texts at levels which are comparatively low. Students who have problems reading texts will experience difficulty in obtaining information from texts, and consequently encounter difficulties in learning (Pretorius 1996:36). Taking into account the importance of reading as described above and the many differently prepared South

African students who enter tertiary education, and in particular, the situation at DUT, the need for reading interventions to improve throughput rates cannot be overemphasized.

Any reading intervention needs to be designed taking into account the differences in the reading abilities of the students in the classroom. These differences can be attributed to a number of factors, for example, linguistic, textual, cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural variables. Although these factors will be discussed in more detail in the literature review (*c.f.* Chapter 3), my primary focus is on the socio-cultural variables. While I do recognize that no one type of variable is less important than the other, my decision to focus on the socio-cultural variables simply implies that I am approaching the problem of reading comprehension from a particular perspective, that is, the socio-cultural perspective. This thesis, in agreement with the ideological model (Street 1984, 1993, 1995), considers academic literacy from the perspective of a set of cultural understandings to which students are expected to conform and the cultural understandings that they bring with them into the classroom. An ethnographic inquiry into students' attitudes towards and practices of reading and writing would allow me access to such cultural understandings, in particular, the role of reading in the students' lives, and how far this role has been shaped by early family and school experiences.

Research in applied linguistics and reading research shows a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages. For example, a study conducted by Pretorius (2000) at the University of South Africa found that many first year Psychology and Sociology students were reading at 'frustration level'³⁹. Pretorius (2000) grouped students on the basis of their final examination marks into four groups, that is, fail (49% or less), at risk (50 to 59%), pass (60 to 73%) and distinction (73% or more). The students' reading scores were then compared to their academic grouping. She found a strong correlation between reading and academic performance. Reading research has also shown that reading strategies can be taught to students, and when taught, they can enhance student performance on tests of comprehension and recall (Carrell 1985, Carrell, Pharis and Liberto 1989, Pearson and Fielding 1991, Dreyer and Nel 2003). The strategies taught and the methods used to teach these strategies vary in the different research studies (*c.f.* Chapter 4). However, to the best of my knowledge

³⁹ The reader reads with less than 90% decoding accuracy and 60% or less comprehension (Lesiak and Bradley-Johnson 1983).

none of the previous studies are influenced by both the process and sociolinguistic approaches to reading coupled with extensive content-based reading to teach students, first, selected reading strategies one at a time, and second, to use the same strategies all at once during the course of their reading.

The process approach to reading involves knowledge about the processes and actions involved in reading. It also includes knowledge about how to monitor these processes. This process often is referred to as 'metacognitive awareness'. Auerbach and Paxton (1997) show that a process approach to reading leads to growing awareness, choice, and control thereby influencing beliefs about the reading process. However, an important point to note is that in order for the process approach to be effective, it should be located within the social domain. Luke and Freebody (1997:219) argue that "...It (reading) is about developing ways of seeing through texts, their descriptions of culture and worlds, and how they are trying to position you to be part of these cultures and worlds". They suggest that academic literacy is developed as the student's understanding becomes clearer of the role reading and writing play within their academic contexts with constant interaction between reading and writing. These interactions are mediated through the texts and the discourses within a community. In this research, while the teaching of reading strategies is aimed to raise awareness of the particular reading strategy, the process used to raise such awareness will lead students towards becoming active, purposeful, and critical readers.

Many researchers (Brandt 1990; Gambrell 1996; Alexander and Fox 2004) stress that while we should do whatever we can to facilitate our students' text processing, we also need to do whatever we can to motivate our students to read. Villaume and Brabham (2002:673) suggest that for many students the greatest obstacles to comprehension are their own dispositions toward reading. By raising students' awareness of reading strategies and metacognitive awareness, student sensitivity in the classroom increases, which increases motivation which should impact positively in building confidence and learning.

In this section, while providing a rationale and motivation for my research, I have also made reference to various issues, for example literacy and reading, reading comprehension and reading strategy instruction. These issues will be discussed in more

detail in the literature review chapters of the thesis (*c.f.* Chapters 2, 3 and 4). Arising from this discussion, the next section highlights the problems investigated and the key questions posed for exploration in this thesis.

1.3 Problems investigated and key questions

This thesis investigates the influence of reading strategies on reading comprehension through the use of integrated reading/writing activities. This is done by means of an action research project that examines the teaching of three reading strategies. The three reading strategies are: identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text, using context clues to identify words in a passage, and summarization. While there are a range of strategies that may be taught to students to assist them with their comprehension, the above-mentioned three reading strategies are important because in years of teaching I have come to realise that these are strategies with which students most often struggle. Discussions also were held between myself and with colleagues at DUT who confirmed that these were high priority strategies needed by students for successful reading comprehension. In fact, making generalizations and synthesizing information were also listed as strategies that present problems to students. However, I felt that teaching too many strategies at once could confuse students more than benefit them. Further, the scope of the study would become too broad with the associated interventions having less of an impact on the students; hence, the decision to focus on the three above-mentioned strategies. In no way does this focus indicate that the other reading strategies are not of equal importance. The decision to teach reading strategies is also supported by research in the field. Many studies in the field of reading strategy interventions have discussed the importance of identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text (Yule and Brown 1983; Baumann 1984; Cooper 1986; McWhorter 1992; Du Plooy 1995; Kaplan-Dolgoy 1998), using context cues to identify words in a passage (Kruse 1979; Nation 1979; Mason and Au 1990; Pittelmann and Heimlich 1991; Du Plooy 1995; Ying 2001), and summarizing (Brown and Day 1983; Kirkland and Saunders 1991; Alvermann and Qian 1994; Kaplan-Dolgoy 1998; Friend 2000) in enhancing reading comprehension.

From a preliminary survey of the literature in preparation for the implementation of the action research project, as well as the findings of the pilot study, it became clear that the students' dispositions towards reading also play an important role in their reading

comprehension. It is, therefore, important to first understand students as individuals, in particular, their reading practices, their approach to learning, their values, beliefs, language and motivating factors. In this regard, an ethnographic inquiry would enable access into students' worlds and practices. Thus, the thesis entails an action research project that involves the teaching of three reading strategies and is complemented by an ethnographic account of students' reading lives because it is argued that attitude, background, and motivation are key to the 'learning to read' and 'reading to learn' process. In addition, obtaining information on the students' family reading and writing practices is important as it would allow for an understanding of how the language and literacy practices in the students' homes and communities differ (or are the same) from those valued in higher education. Further, New Literacy Studies⁴⁰ (*c.f.* Chapter 2) which underpins this research, criticises research on reading that focuses on reading strategies in isolation. In NLS, literacy is perceived as inherently contextually based (Hudson 1998) and its perspective on cognition is that it cannot be abstracted from social persons and the culture of the reader (Street 1993).

Given that reading and writing are complementary processes that should not be isolated from each other, it is important that writing exercises be included in any reading strategy intervention and *vice versa*. The need for integrated reading/writing activities is supported by Balfour (2002:35, Report 7) who found that his participants were "slightly less proficient at grasping textual significance (through reading) and communicating further implications (in writing) in terms of a stated problem, than comprehending basic meaning in a given text". Support for integrated reading/writing activities is further provided by Young *et al.* (2001:17, Report 2)⁴¹ who state that the students' "reading skills can and must be developed in relation to their writing skills which, though acceptable in general communicative contexts, generally fall short of the standard required in academic writing contexts". It must be noted that one of the outcomes of the academic literacy course is to improve students' writing abilities in their disciplines. Therefore, the ethnographic inquiry also included an investigation of students' attitudes and practices

⁴⁰ The NLS is as a result of a group of researchers (for example, Barton 1994; Street 1995, 1996a; and Gee 1996) who refer to themselves as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) group.

⁴¹ The study by Young *et al.* (2001) was conducted with eighty-eight first year students at University of Natal (now University of KwaZulu-Natal). These students attended an English language course (ELC) in 2001 and wrote an exam in June that year. The IELTS test was used as a pre- and post-test before and after the ELC. The results indicated that students performed best in the speaking exam, then writing, and then listening. Their performance was weakest in the reading examination.

towards writing. The teaching of the reading strategies invariably led to the use of a series of writing tasks that provided students with sufficient writing practice. Discipline specific materials were used throughout the action research project to make the project more meaningful to students and to provide them with enough practice writing in their disciplines. Writing exercises were also included to ascertain students' views of the different reading strategy interventions. While these exercises shed light on how students were coping in terms of the different reading strategy interventions, it is important to note that their actual writing was not analysed as this is not the focus of the thesis.

The lecturing staff play a vital role in student development/learning and therefore it is important to understand their perceptions of the students they teach. To this end the project also investigated the lecturers' attitudes towards and practices of reading and writing in their disciplines, as well as their perceptions of their students' reading and writing behaviours.

In order to address the above objectives, some of the key questions to be asked are:

1. What are the students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing?
2. What are the reading and writing behaviours that typify the particular families from which the students come?
 - 2.1 Do the students' home literacies interface with the academic literacy norms of higher education?
 - 2.2 If so, how?
3. Are students motivated to read?
 - 3.1 If so, what motivates students to read?
4. Does the teaching of reading strategies enhance reading comprehension?

Having described the questions which underpin my research, the next section provides the reader with a brief description of the structure of the thesis. As will be shown, the structure of the thesis reflects an integrated approach to a further exploration of the questions outlined above.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In order to answer the research questions posed in this thesis, I have organized the thesis into nine chapters, and four thematic parts.

Part I: Reading comprehension development: context, theory, and access comprises Chapters 1, 2, and 3. In Chapter 1, I contextualise the study by providing a brief overview of the literacy levels and the reading situation in South Africa and at the DUT. The Chapter also provides a brief narrative of the manner in which the academic development programmes changed at DUT since 1997, the purpose of which is to highlight the impact of the changing notions of literacy on academic development programmes. This narrative is necessary since this research is located within national and international research on academic development. This discussion is then followed by the rationale and motivation for the study and a presentation of the problems investigated and the key questions raised.

Chapters 2 and 3 consist of a review of the literature of the different areas of my study on which this thesis is based. In particular, Chapter 2 describes the concept of literacy and reading while Chapter 3 focuses on reading comprehension.

Part II: The design, methodology, and implications of my study comprise Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4 a theoretical and pedagogical discussion is provided on the three reading strategies selected for implementation in the action research project, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words, and summarization. The design of the intervention is also provided in this chapter.

Chapter 5 describes the implementation and evaluation of the pilot and final research project. In Chapter 5 I place myself broadly within the interpretivist paradigm and to some degree within the post-structural paradigm and indicate how this has determined the research framework. The Chapter also provides details about the research process comprising the action research project and its attendant ethnographic inquiry. The data from the action research project are presented in three chapters: Chapters 6, 7, and 8 respectively, which form Part III of the thesis: Reading, writing, and integrated reading and writing strategy interventions. The focus of Chapter 6 is students' attitudes and

practices towards reading, while Chapter 7 deals with the students' attitudes and practices towards writing. In Chapter 8 I describe and discuss in detail the pedagogical process and findings of the action research project.

Finally, in Part IV: Conclusions, and implications for teaching, learning, and further research, I present Chapter 9 which concludes the thesis. Chapter 9 provides a summary of the findings in response to the key questions, a critical reflection on the research process, and a discussion on the implications of the findings for future research on reading instruction in higher education in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2: LITERACY AND READING

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I provided an overview of the literacy and reading levels among school goers in South Africa and further located the discussions in terms of DUT students' experiences and performance within the DUT context. Noting that reading is an integral part of a students' academic development, the changes that occurred in the academic development programmes both at the ex-Natal Technikon and ex-M.L. Sultan Technikon were described. What emerges is that changing understandings of the concept of 'literacy' have led to different practices among educators and researchers. However, while some educators have accepted the shift in the notions of literacy, and have made useful and helpful adjustments in their pedagogy, there is still a need to raise awareness concerning outdated notions of literacy and their negative effects on learning.

This Chapter provides a detailed discussion of literacy, new literacy, and academic literacy, taking cognisance of the fact that over the years there has been a shift in the theoretical development and pedagogical approaches to literacy. These concepts form the foundation for the study to be undertaken and a discussion of them will explain the thinking behind the changing ideologies and pedagogy by academic development practitioners. I then provide a discussion on reading (which is the focus of this study), beginning with a brief history of L2¹ reading development. Since the majority of the participants in this study are English L2 or additional language students (EAL students), it is appropriate that the Chapter focus on an understanding of L2 reading development. Thereafter, various definitions of reading and the processes involved in reading are reviewed. The Chapter concludes with a discussion of the skills and strategies of good and poor readers. An understanding of the skills and strategies that characterise a 'good' or a 'poor' reader² will enable

¹ The terms L1 and L2 as used in this thesis are explained as follows: L1 is one's primary medium of communication, in particular, in the home environment and is usually the mother-tongue. L2 is the second most frequently used language of communication. Within the South African situation, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the first language of the majority of the citizens is isiZulu. The medium of communication at school/university in the Province is English. Therefore, for many Zulu students English may be a L2 language. Nowadays in literature the term English Additional Language (EAL) instead of L2 is used since English may not necessarily be the students 2nd language but could be a 3rd or even 4th language. In the literature review I use the term L2, but thereafter change to using EAL students.

² The terms 'good' and 'poor' readers are used in this thesis to mean good and poor comprehenders, irrespective of their fluency in reading.

educators to be aware of the reading abilities of their students and more specifically whether they are in need of assistance.

2.2 Literacy

Since the 1950s reading and writing within education have been the focus of much attention in the form of theoretical models, pedagogical approaches, and research activity. Much of the research during this period was dominated by paradigms from psychology which attempted to understand reading, writing, spelling, and comprehension as cognitive and behavioural processes in order to improve teaching and learning. Most of the research fell under the areas of 'reading' and 'writing', rather than 'literacy' studies. However, there was some research that focused on literacy *per se*. For example, researchers in the fields of economics of education, and educational development and planning, "were concerned with the social implications and efficacies of literacy" (Lankshear 1999: online). Some of these concerns were raised in the World Literacy Program of UNESCO³. In addition, in certain countries such as the United States of America, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, interest among researchers grew in adult literacy⁴. The focus of these adult literacy programmes was on functional literacy targeting mainly migrant populations and educationally disadvantaged individuals from indigenous populations. However, it was only until the late 1970s that literacy, in relation to school-based learning and teacher education, became an increasingly important topic of discussion (Lankshear 1999). Prior to this (that is, in the late 1970s), an explicit educational interest in literacy was peripheral.

Perspectives on what literacy is, have changed dramatically over the years, with each new definition making greater demands on what it means to be literate. According to Crandall (1992:87) early definitions characterized literacy either in terms of direct measures (for example, an individual's ability to read and write a simple sentence) or indirect measures (for example, the completion of four to six years of

³ UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation) was founded on 16 November 1945. UNESCO functions as a "laboratory of ideas and a standard-setter to forge universal issues. The Organisation also serves as a clearinghouse for the dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge" (online: accessed 2006). UNESCO launched in 1964 a pilot venture called the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP), in eleven different countries, namely, Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, Syria, and Tanzania. The aims of the EWLP were to transform literacy into an effective instrument for social and economic development. The new approach became associated with work-oriented programmes. The EWLP was regarded as a failure by the evaluators because the programmes were too technical and ignored social, cultural and logistic factors (Luke and Freebody 1997:198).

⁴ Interest in adult literacy grew because of the increase in the number of educationally disadvantaged children who attended school.

education). However, later definitions (from about the mid-1960s) began to describe literacy in functional terms, focusing on the ways literacy is used to achieve goals in a variety of contexts. UNESCO distinguishes between basic literacy and functional literacy and its definition of a literate person is the most commonly accepted definition. According to UNESCO (1978, in the UNESCO Education for all global monitoring report, 2006) a literate person “....can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his/her everyday life”. A functionally literate person must be able to “...engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his/her group and community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his/her own and the community’s development”.

During the past two decades, the notion of literacy as being distinct from reading and writing has become more common. This shift has led to the emergence of ‘literacy studies’, which encompasses a broad range of activities concerned with understanding and enhancing the production, reception, and transmission of texts. Changes in the notion of literacy also led to changes in curriculum theory and practice. Historically, the development of literacy during English lessons was one in which language was taught as a set of skills. Drawing on the work of linguistics literacy studies now involves curricula studies undertaken within English subject areas such as composition, textual studies, rhetoric and grammar. An even wider perspective of literacy studies (Green 1988, 1993; Lemke 1990; and Martin 1989, 1992) includes subject (specific) literacies, for example, including accounts of different genres related to subject-specific modes of inquiry and production as well as dealing with aspects and issues of subject disciplines as interrelated rather than isolated practices. Further, since the mid 1980s, literacy studies began to define literacy as a socially contested concept grounded in an understanding of literacy as a socio-cultural practice. Freire (1985) was one of the first theorists to suggest that literacy must always be seen from within an ideological framework. He challenged the notion that the acquisition of literacy is in itself empowering. Instead, he proposed that education’s socialising functions determine the role that literacy has to play. According to Bloome and Green (1992:50), literacy and education are perceived as “social and cultural practices and actions, which vary across cultures, communities, technologies and across situations even within the same setting”. Therefore, there exists a multitude of literacies rather than a single literacy. According to Richardson (1998:116), there is not literacy or illiteracy, but literacies which are formed and function in particular social contexts.

From the above discussion, two important approaches to literacy can be identified on the grounds of their theoretical orientation. Street (1984)⁵ in “*Literacy and Theory in Practice*” identifies these as the ‘autonomous’ model (based on the ‘traditional’ view of literacy) and the ‘ideological’ model (based on the ‘socio-cultural’ view). Each of these two models will be discussed below in more detail since these changes in the notion of literacy have important implications for the use of reading and writing and how we understand them.

2.2.1 *The autonomous model*

Proponents of the autonomous model (Goody and Watt 1963; Havelock 1963, Ong 1982) assume that written language is superior to oral language in that written language can achieve autonomy whereas oral discourse is always context-bound. In the autonomous model literacy is considered as neutral and value-free functioning independently from other social and cultural practices in a society (Von Gruenewaldt 1999:206). The view is that if societies acquire literacy they would advance socially, cognitively, and economically (Feldman 1991:47; Street 1993:82). For example, Goody (1977) claims that the traits that distinguish ‘advanced’ cultures from ‘primitive’ cultures are related to changes in communication, particularly writing. Gee (1996) attempted to summarize the arguments of Goody (1977). According to Gee (1996:51), Goody argues that the development of writing was linked to “the growth of individualism, the growth of bureaucracy and of more depersonalized and more abstract systems of government, as well as to the development of the abstract thought and syllogistic reasoning that culminate in modern science”.

Street (1993:82) states that an analysis of the ways in which reading and writing instruction occurs, or the manner in which literacy skills are assessed, have been largely in keeping with the autonomous model. However, in recent years these assumptions have been challenged by researchers⁶ who advocate a social theory in understanding literacy and literacy studies. For example, researchers such as Olsen (1977), as well as Hill and Parry (1990), argue that in the autonomous model texts are treated as though they have independent meaning (that is, meaning is found in the text), autonomous of the cultural context in which it is produced and interpreted.

⁵ Street’s theoretical conceptualization of New Literacy Studies is derived from his fieldwork in Iran (Schultz and Hull 2002:22). In an ethnographic inquiry into village life in Iran, Street identified three different kinds of literacy practice used by adults and youths, namely, ‘Maktab’ literacy or literacy associated with Islam and taught in the local Quranic schools; ‘commercial’ literacy, or the reading and writing used for the management of fruit sales; and school literacy.

⁶ See for example, Scollon and Scollon (1981), Heath (1983), Street (1984), Coop-Gumperz (1986), Gee (1989), Kress (1989), Cazden (1998), and Rose *et al.* (1999).

Within this model, the reader is also treated in isolation of the literacy practices embedded in his/her society. Similarly, the cognitive skills that the reader employs in decoding a text and in writing are also seen as being independent of the context in which it is produced and interpreted. Hence, by disregarding the participants and the social and cultural contexts, literacy merely becomes a set of skills necessary for individuals to undertake reading and writing. It is implied that once these skills are acquired early in a child's life they would be transferred without any problems across contexts and situations (Richardson 1998:116).

The autonomous model has been rejected by many researchers⁷ who argue that literacy is not neutral and autonomous but is embedded in social and cultural contexts and is contested and 'ideological' (Street 1993:82). This rejection gave rise to the emergence of the ideological model.

2.2.2 The ideological model

In the ideological model literacy is understood in terms of a society's or group's social practices, economic conditions, social structure and local ideologies (Gee 1990:61). Thus literacy is seen as a set of social practices each of which is embedded in specific contexts. Literacy perceived in this way cannot be separated from the people who use it. Within the ideological model then, meaning construction is determined by the knowledge the creator and interpreter bring with them to the text. This knowledge includes not only vocabulary and grammatical structures but also contextual and personal knowledge.

Two important concepts within the ideological model are 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices'. Barton *et al.* (2000:7) say that "literacy practices are cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives". Practices are processes internal to the individual and cannot be observed because they involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. These also include a person's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy, as well as how a person understands literacy and communicates. Literacy practices are also social processes which enable people to interact with one another. They include shared perceptions arising from common beliefs and social identities. Literacy events, on the other hand, are activities where literacy has a role. Texts are a crucial part of literacy events. Events arise and are shaped by practices and can be

⁷ See for example, Street (1984), Levine (1986), Luke (1988), Gee (1989), Cazden (1998), and Barton and Hamilton (2000).

observed. According to Lea (1998:158) “literacy is understood within both the contexts and the ideologies in which a set of particular literacy practices are embedded”. Attention should be given to the social contexts within which any literacy event occurs, as well as to the meanings that are produced for individuals who are engaged in any process of reading and writing. For example, some texts can be read in different ways, depending upon people’s experiences of practices in which these texts occur.

From a socio-cultural perspective any definition of literacy has to make sense of reading, writing, and meaning making in the context of the social, cultural, economic, political and historical practices of which they are a part. Gee (1996) provides such a definition by defining literacy in relation to Discourses⁸. Discourses, according to Gee (1990, 1992, 1996), are socially recognized ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and, often reading and/or writing⁹. These ‘ways’ enable us to be identified and recognised as being a member of a particular social group and are acquired by enculturation (“apprenticeship”) into social practices through interaction with people who have already acquired knowledge of the relevant Discourse. From this view reading, writing, and language are fixed firmly in, and cannot be separated from Discourses, that is, they are bound to particular Discourses. Hence, reading, writing, and language cannot be seen as isolated skills independent of a specific content and context.

Gee (1990:151-153) distinguishes between primary Discourses (the way we learn to do and be within our family) and secondary Discourses (the way we learn to do and be outside our family, for example, schools, workplace, church, and so on). Our primary Discourses may either be ‘close to’ or ‘away from’ our secondary Discourses. However, if our primary Discourses are ‘away from’ our secondary Discourses then it becomes more difficult to perform within the secondary Discourse. Gee (1990:153) defines literacy “as mastery of, or fluent control over, a secondary Discourse”. Thus, in this sense, literacy is always plural, that is, “literacies” since

⁸ Discourses are spelt with a capital ‘D’. Gee (1990:142) uses discourses (with a small ‘d’) for connected stretches of language that make sense, like conversations, stories, reports, arguments, and essays. He argues that ‘discourse’ is part of ‘Discourse’ and that ‘Discourse’ with a big ‘D’ is always more than just language.

⁹ Wenger (1998) makes reference to ‘communities of practice’ which is similar to Gee’s (1996) notion of Discourse. Wenger (1998:4) defines communities of practice as

a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do...it includes the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures...that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conversations, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions...and shared world views.

there are many secondary Discourses. To locate this within the South African context, by way of example, one could argue that within South Africa indigenous Africans have been historically disadvantaged. Thus, for many students, their primary Discourses are 'away from' the Discourses they are exposed to in schools¹⁰. Hence, they are more likely to struggle academically. To this end, Heath (1982a, 1983) shows that working class children performed comparably with middle class children in lower grades on literacy tasks. However, these children fell progressively behind in higher grades. She argues that the 'ways' of talking, believing, acting, and living out go beyond merely encoding and decoding texts and are different within the social practices of the different social groups. Delpit (1988:283) concurring with Heath (1982a, 1982b, 1983) argues that children from middle class homes tend to perform better in school than children from non-middle class homes because "the culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper and middle classes – of those in power". Therefore, she argues for the teaching of the genres of power¹¹. For students who are not part of the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules will make the acquisition of power easier¹². Critical theorists, for example, Apple (1979), make reference to the "cultural capital" that middle class children bring with them into school. Because these children are already participants in the culture of power and have already internalised its codes, they are more likely to succeed academically. Bernstein (1971:136) distinguishes between elaborated and restricted codes. He argues that children who are socialised in middle-class strata generally possess both an elaborated and a restricted code, while children from lower working-class homes are generally limited to a restricted code. To succeed in school, it is essential that children possess an elaborated code.

The ideological model has given rise to a new and growing approach to the study of literacy called "The New Literacy". Other names for this approach are sociolinguistic, sociocognitive, and socioconstructive approaches (Botel *et al.* 1993:113). The new literacy approach to literacy studies is a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning, where high value is placed on both the independence and interdependence of the learner. It contrasts with the formal and more traditional teacher-centred approach where the primary emphasis is placed on

¹⁰ In other words, many EAL students' home literacies may be different from the literacies that they are exposed to in higher education.

¹¹ Johns (1997) also argues for the explicit teaching of the genres of power.

¹² Luke (1996) disagrees and states that teaching dominant genres leads to uncritical reproduction of the *status quo*. However, other researchers, for example, Christie (1996), and Martin (1993) argue that teaching about genres provides students with the necessary base to analyse, critique, and challenge

text books, work books, and tests (Botel *et al.* 1993:113). The new literacy approach underpins the research conducted in this study and is therefore discussed in detail in the next section.

2.3 The new literacy approach

The new literacy (NL) approach to literacy development arose in the 1980s in response to the existing dissatisfaction in the classroom, especially in the western world, where many students find themselves alienated from the culture of teaching and learning prevalent in the classroom. Despite the commitment of the educators, the students were not able to connect much of the curriculum, in particular in the areas of reading and writing, to their daily lives (Willinsky 1990: ix). To this end in 1995, Gee and a group of researchers¹³ from the United States, England, and Australia who refer to themselves as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) Group, have applied social theories of learning to the development of literacies. The NLS represents a new way of perceiving literacy, focusing on literacy as a social practice, with recognition of multiple literacies (Street 2003:1).

The new literacy approach challenges the conventional forms of classroom life as well as questions the accepted conceptions of literacy when it declares that purpose and intent¹⁴ are the foremost concerns for literacy (Willinsky 1990:8). The focal point of this intent and purpose is shifted to the student rather than remaining with the educator and the curriculum. The new literacy approach promotes the development of authentic reasons for reading a text, specifically, to answer a question or solve a problem, and “imposes a need for effective ways to read” (Falk-Ross 2002:279). Within the new literacy approach students are seen as authors and meaning makers. Thus students’ control over the text and its meaning is increased. This perspective has implications for the relationship between the educator and student. The educator devolves authority and greater responsibility to the student by encouraging greater participation and creative, innovative thinking, through which the student arrives at his/her interpretation of the text. Fundamental to the new

them and therefore not teaching genres of power will serve to further disadvantage students who are already disadvantaged.

¹³ The group met initially in 1994, in New London, New Hampshire, to “consider the future of literacy teaching; to discuss what would need to be taught in a rapidly changing near future; and how this should be taught” (Cope and Kalantzis 2000:3). They referred to themselves initially as the New London Group.

¹⁴ Willinsky (1990:8) demonstrates this point by using the example of a bike. Advocates of new literacy argue that the point is not to develop the ability to ride which requires practicing and demonstrating the skill. If bikes are worth riding, then learning should begin with the intent of taking the rider places. The focus should be on the places one wishes to ride to, and the pleasures one gains along the way. It is believed that in the process of riding with a purpose, the skill would improve naturally.

literacy approach is that students are seen as sources of experience and meaning. Hence, from this perspective the work of the classroom is redesigned around the different forms of reading and writing (Willinsky 1990:7). Further, new literacy is not perceived as an isolated set of skills. Literacy is seen as a social process that involves interaction with, amongst others, society, culture, schooling and history. According to Willinsky (1990:8) a defining characteristic of the new literacy is as follows:

The New Literacy consists of those strategies in the teaching of reading and writing which attempt to shift control of literacy from the teacher to the student; literacy is promoted in such programs as a social process with language that can from the very beginning extend the students' range of meaning and connection.

The new literacy approach is supported by the models of other researchers who also argue that reading must be meaningful and useful to students. For example, Rosenblatt (1994:1063) characterizes the reading process as a transaction between the reader and the text, strengthening the importance of the reader's prior knowledge and goals. She argues that the text should not be treated as an isolated entity. Further, there should not be an overemphasis on either the author or reader. Instead, the reader and the text are two aspects of a dynamic process. Freire and Macedo (1987:29) say that reading is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world¹⁵. In other words, students' abilities to read the word are built on their abilities to read the world around them. According to Bloome (1993:100-101), reading should be seen as a social process, taking into account not only author-reader interaction, but also the social relationships among people during reading.

Important to the applicability of new literacy studies is an understanding of the notion of academic literacy. It is necessary to give a brief discussion of academic literacy since learning in higher education involves adjusting to new ways of knowing and to new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge (Lea 1998:158). Further, it is through academic literacy practices that students are able to learn new content and enhance their knowledge in different areas of study.

¹⁵ Brown and Yule (1983:79) say that this information is part of the readers' presuppositional pool. According to Venneman (1975:314) a presupposition pool contains information "constituted from general knowledge, from the situative context of the discourse, and from the completed part of the discourse itself". Brown and Yule (1983) argue that each participant in a discourse has a presuppositional pool

2.4. Academic literacy

In keeping with the ideological model and the discussion above, this thesis examines academic literacy within a framework that takes cognisance of the cultural norms of the societies to which the students belong. In addition to textual and structural conventions, these cultural norms include definitions of what counts as knowledge; how knowledge is constructed and how it can be talked or written about (Boughey 1994:24). To accommodate students from different cultural backgrounds, it is important that they be given very explicit and overt instruction in order to acquire the strategic competence required for academic success (Cazden 1995:26). For example, explicit tuition can be given in the various strategies that students need to successfully read and write academic discourse.

There are many definitions of academic literacy. Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8) describe academic literacy as “....a student’s capacity to use written language to perform those functions required by the culture in ways and at a level judged acceptable by the reader”. They further stress that academic literacy involves learning to ‘read’ the culture of the university and learning to come to terms with its “distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour”. In other words, students must understand the “rules and conventions” that govern the learning process. These “rules and conventions” are regarded as a social construct and do not emerge naturally. Further, academic literacy requires ‘cracking the cultural code’ both in terms of the university context and the discipline (1988:11).

Researchers, for example, Johns (1997), and Cope and Kalantzis (1993)¹⁶, argue that academic literacy is not just generic, but is always contextualised within a genre. Johns (1997:47) holds the view that academic literacy “...encompasses ways of knowing particular content and refers to strategies for understanding, discussing, organising, and producing texts...”. As an example, Johns (1997) suggests that in order to help students, we train them as researchers so that they are able to write texts that meet the expectations of their discipline. This will also enable students to discover the knowledge and skills that are necessary for membership into their particular academic community. Although Johns (1997) says that it is not possible to

and as the discourse proceeds, the pool is added to. Furthermore, within the presuppositional pool of any discourse there are discourse subjects.

¹⁶ Cope and Kalantzis (1993:67) define genres as “conventional structures which have evolved as pragmatic schemes for making certain types of meaning to achieve distinctive social goals, in specific setting, by particular linguistic means”. Genre theory and critical theory are similar in that both emphasize the socially constructed nature of language and literacy learning. However, genre theory tends to dismiss process pedagogies and denies the possibility for students to be critical participants.

predict all our students' literacy requirements and experiences, we can help students ask questions of the relevant texts, as well as the contexts in which these texts occur, "thereby helping them to negotiate academic literacies (Zamel and Spack 1998), learn the conversations of their disciplines (Bazerman 1980; Flowerdew 2000), and find out what counts in their area of study" (Paltridge 2002:23).

Paxton (1995:189), a South African academic who explored academic literacies, argues that in most definitions of academic literacy what often is overlooked is that academic literacy is a "very specialized skill", and students have to learn not only what is relevant knowledge in the discipline, but also to use the language of the discipline correctly. Gee (1990) says that academic literacy has to do with "ways of using language, but also the beliefs, attitudes and values of the group". Morrow (1993:3) defines academic literacy as having to do with "epistemological access to higher education", thereby relating academic literacy to specific cultural contexts and the inherent power and ideological relationships.

For over a decade much research has been conducted to address the complexity of academic literacy practices in higher education (Ivanic 1997; Lea and Street 1998; Cohen 1993; Martin and Rose 2005). Reading and writing (from a socio-cultural view) are no longer viewed as a set of skills that can be taught and transferred from one context to another. Street (2001:20) refers to this approach as the 'study skills approach' where the focus is on attempts to 'fix' problems with student learning. In this approach, emphasis is placed on the 'surface' features of language form in terms of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Further, there has been a shift from the assumption that language is a "transparent medium of representation and that particular disciplinary forms are merely reflected in, rather than constructed by, written texts" (Lea 1998:157). This view, according to Street (2001:20), falls within the 'academic socialisation approach' where the focus is on student orientation to learning and interpretation of learning tasks. Although this approach is more sensitive to the student and the cultural context, it has been criticised because it assumes that if the norms and practices of the institution were learnt then one would gain access to the whole institution (Street 2004:14). In the 'academic literacies approach' learning to read and write in the academy involves learning to acquire a repertoire of linguistic practices that are based on complex sets of discourses, identities, and values rather than skill and socialisation (Street 2001:20). The institutions in which literacy practices take place are seen as sites of discourse and power. The academic literacies approach takes into account the number of literacy

practices that students need to engage in, in their studies. It also acknowledges the different positions and identities that participants take up as academic readers and writers.

This thesis is influenced by both the academic socialisation approach and the academic literacies approach. My study attempts to assist students in developing academic literacy in their disciplines through reading and writing. In particular, the aim is to implement reading strategy interventions together with reading/writing activities in order to enhance students' reading comprehension in a manner that will not only assist students with their understanding of their discipline content, but also motivate them to 'engage' with the texts they are required to read. Therefore, the next section focuses on reading, beginning with a brief discussion on the history of second language (L2) reading development since the majority of students in the class are either ESL or EAL students.

2.5 Reading: a brief overview

2.5.1 A brief history of second language reading development

In this section, a brief history of the development of L2 reading is discussed, both in terms of theory and practice. In order to appreciate current theories in L2 reading development it is important to understand previous theories. Since the mid-1960s many changes have taken place in our understanding of reading both in terms of theory and practice. Prior to and during the mid-1960s the dominant approach to teaching was the audiolingual approach. This approach emphasized the teaching of speaking and listening before reading and writing. Reading in a second language was seen as incidental to oral language skills (Fries 1945, 1963). According to Silberstein (1987), attempts to 'teach' reading focused on the use of reading to examine grammar and vocabulary or to practice pronunciation. In many of the audiolingual programmes the teaching of reading was ignored altogether. The dialogues and pattern-practice drills were favoured as these were thought to produce good speakers of a language (Silberstein 1987:28). In fact, the process of learning to read was seen as being mechanical: "students developed habitual (eventually automatic) recognition of the written symbols corresponding to familiar (that is, spoken) language patterns" (Silberstein 1987:28). For example, if the student is presented with the symbol C-A-T, then he/she would immediately produce the word, *cat*, seemingly without any cognitive involvement (Alexander and Fox 2004:35).

During the period 1962 to 1973 the linguistic perspective on reading (influenced by structuralists, for example, Fries 1945; 1963, and Lado 1964) assumed a rather passive, bottom-up, view of reading. In other words, reading was seen as a decoding process of reconstructing the author's intended meaning by recognizing printed letters and words, thereafter advancing to phrases, clauses and linkages between sentences (Carrell 1988a:2). Thus problems experienced by second language students in reading and reading comprehension were seen as decoding problems. In South African schools reading is still taught in this manner (until Grades 3 or 4) using basal readers (*c.f.* Chapter 1). The assumption by educators seems to be that thereafter readers will be able to cope with any reading text (Baatjies 2003).

From about the early-1960s there were some linguists, for example, Fries (1963) and Rivers (1968), who did place importance on background knowledge and, in particular, the role of socio-cultural meaning in second language reading comprehension. Unfortunately, their views did not impact on early theories of L2 reading and the focus remained on decoding, or bottom-up processing (Carrell 1988a:2). For example, Fries (1963:109) asserts that for total comprehension one needed to relate the linguistic meaning of a reading passage to cultural factors. Similarly, Rivers (1968:276) argues that for a L2 student to have complete understanding of the meaning of a text a strong link between culture and language was needed. According to her, differences in cultural values and attitudes are a primary cause for difficulties in foreign language learning. Comprehension is strongly affected if the values expressed by the text differ from the culture specific values of the reader.

In the late 1960s tertiary institutions in the United States of America and Britain faced a demographic shift, with an increase of English Second Language (ESL) students in schools and higher education institutions. Many of these students did not have access to the academic skills required at tertiary level. The audiolingual method, with its emphasis on oral language skills, was not able to address this need and was, therefore, challenged (Grabe 1991:376). This demographic shift also led to changes in ESL instruction, focusing on advanced reading and writing instruction and in the mid-to late-1970s to changes in approaches of reading and writing instruction¹⁷.

¹⁷ See for example, Eskey (1973), Saville-Troike (1973), Smith (1979, 1982), and Goodman (1985).

A major change in the model of reading began by the publication of Goodman's (1967) article, "*Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game*", followed by Smith's (1971) publication "*Understanding Reading*". Their views of reading served as the foundation of the psycholinguistic view of reading, as discussed below.

A psycholinguistic view of reading

From the psycholinguistic perspective reading is seen as a unique information-processing skill. The reader is perceived as an "active, planning, decision-making individual" who uses a number of skills and strategies to aid in comprehension (Silberstein 1987:28). Goodman (1967:498) argues that reading is a selective process in the sense that it is not possible to read at a rapid rate by looking at all the words on a page. Therefore, good readers would use their previous knowledge and experience when reading to predict information, sample the text, and confirm their predictions. Goodman names four processes in reading: predicting, sampling, confirming, and correcting. The reader makes guesses about the text and then samples the text to confirm or disconfirm the guesses. Thus, efficient reading results when the reader is able to use minimum cues necessary to make correct guesses. Smith (1973) concurred with Goodman, and went further to suggest that more information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. He also placed much importance on background knowledge when constructing meaning in a text. Other reading experts argued that Goodman's theory was a concept-driven, top-down theory in which "higher-level processes interact with, and direct the flow of information through lower-level processes" (Stanovich 1980:34).

Initially, Goodman (1967) did not relate his theory to ESL readers. Two influential articles in the late 1970s that attempted to translate his theory into ESL contexts were by Clarke and Silberstein (1977) and Coady¹⁸ (1979). Using the psycholinguistic perspective on reading, Clarke and Silberstein (1977) outlined some implications for ESL instructions. Reading was seen as an active process of comprehending and, therefore, it was necessary to teach students strategies to read more effectively, for example, guess meaning of words from the context and to make inferences about the text (Grabe 1991:377). In addition, educators should help students to improve their reading by providing them with a range of effective

¹⁸ Coady's (1979) implications for teaching instruction were similar to those mentioned above by Clarke and Silberstein (1977). However, he argued that the reading process required three components: process strategies (word identification), background knowledge, and conceptual abilities (general intellectual capacity). He suggests that while beginning readers focused on process strategies, more proficient readers made better use of their background knowledge and conceptual abilities.

approaches to texts. For example, these could include explaining goals and strategies for reading, making use of pre-reading activities to foster conceptual readiness, and providing strategies to help students to cope with difficult syntax, vocabulary and text structure (Grabe 1991:377). Further, Clark and Silberstein (1977) argued that students should be conscious of their purpose for reading so that they can decide how to approach the reading task.

In the 1980s Goodman's (1967) and Smith's (1971) perspectives on reading were extended by further research on ESL reading theory and practice¹⁹. Also during this period, L2 research began to examine L1 reading research for further insights into L2 reading, the primary goal being to identify the successful reading strategies and techniques of fluent L1 readers and using these to develop a programme for L2 readers.

In providing a historical perspective on reading research and practice, Alexander and Fox (2004) distinguish between the periods 1986 to 1995 and 1996 to the present. While the authors do not specifically relate their discussion to L2 reading, their views on reading are applicable to all readers. From about the mid-1980s to 1995 the increased influence of socio-cultural factors led to a period they refer to as 'the era of socio-cultural learning'. The socio-cultural era of learning led to a number of ethnographic and qualitative modes of inquiry (for example, Heath 1983 and Rogoff 1990). Literacy was studied in natural settings and with naturally occurring texts. Reconciliations were made between schooled and unschooled knowledge²⁰ (Gardner 1991). According to Alexander and Fox (2004:48), schooling and learning was regarded as a social and cultural phenomenon, with schools designed to serve socially contrived goals (*c.f.* Sections 2.2.2 and 2.3).

Alexander and Fox (2004:50) refer to the period 1966 to present as the era of engaged learning. This period has arisen due to a recognition that too little regard was given to motivation in previous years. Hence the focus of this era was on factors such as students' goals, interests, self-efficacy beliefs, self-regulation²¹, and active involvement in reading and text-based learning (see, for example, Hidi 1990, Ames 1992, Turner 1995, Almasi *et al.* 1996). These motivational factors were considered together with other factors such as the students' knowledge, strategic abilities, socio-

¹⁹ For example, Bernhardt (1991).

²⁰ Gee (1990) refers to this as primary and secondary Discourses (*c.f.* Section 2.2.2).

²¹ Self-regulation strategies include planning ahead, testing self-comprehension, checking effectiveness of strategies used, and revising strategies.

cultural background as well the context in which learning occurs. Alexander and Fox (2004:51) argue that the previous views of reading do not effectively capture “the complexity of reading or recognizes the changing nature of reading as individuals continue their academic development”. Reading is a domain that relates to readers of all ages and abilities.

In the era of the ‘engaged reader’, reading is not confined only to traditional print materials, but includes texts students encounter daily (for example, non-linear and interactive materials through audio-visual media). According to research (Guthrie and Wigfield 2000) on reader engagement, the reader is an active and wilful participant in the construction of knowledge. While still taking account of the reader’s socio-cultural context, attention is turned to “the individual working to create a personally meaningful and socially valuable body of knowledge” (Alexander and Fox 2004:52). Two guiding principles on the research on reading are mentioned in this era. First is the complex and multidimensional nature of reading. All factors, that is, cognitive, aesthetic, socio-cultural and motivational, are actively and interactively involved in reading development. Second, in the learning environment, the student should be exposed to a range of textual materials, both traditional and alternative.

The discussion on the ‘engaged reader’ is relevant because, as indicated in Chapter 1, my research involves both socio-cultural factors as well as motivational factors. The next section provides a discussion of various definitions of reading.

2.5.2 Definitions of reading

It is important to define reading because the way one defines it, for example, will influence the type of reading programme to be instituted, as well as determine the goals of the reading programme and influence its outcome.

Although a number of researchers, for example, Carroll (1964), Goodman (1988), Rosenblatt (1994), Pearson and Stephens (1994), and Pretorius (1996), have offered definitions and explanations of reading, there has been no formal definition because reading can take a variety of meanings depending on the context in which it occurs (Smith 1971:176). It is important to note that some researchers, for example, Grabe (1991), prefer to describe the reading process rather than to provide a definition of reading. According to Grabe (1991:378) an acceptable description of reading must “account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing”. Nevertheless, for this thesis and

the project, conducted as it is within the context of an academic environment, I will provide definitions offered by some researchers and provide a rationale for the use of one definition as a working definition for the purposes of my research.

Carroll (1964:62) defines reading as “the activity of reconstructing (overtly or covertly) a reasonable spoken message from a printed text, and making meaning responses to the reconstructed message that would parallel those that would be made to the spoken message”. Richards *et al.* (1992:306) offer the following two definitions of reading:

- i) ‘perceiving a written text to understand its content’, which understanding is referred to as reading comprehension, and
- ii) ‘saying a written text aloud’, which may not necessarily involve understanding of its contents.

They assert that depending on the purpose of the reading and the type of reading used, there would be different types of comprehension.

According to Goodman (1988:12), reading “is a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs”. Pretorius (1996:36) asserts that current theories view reading

...as a complex, multi-componential phenomenon that includes the rapid and simultaneous interaction of numerous processes. For example, it requires encoding or bottom-up oculomotor processes that direct the eye from one print element to the next, perceptual processes that encode the visual pattern of a word, lexical processes that access word meaning from memory, and various other linguistic processes that compute the semantic and syntactic relationships among successive words, phrases, and sentences. In addition, there are comprehending or top-down cognitive mechanisms that compute the semantic and logical relationships between successive sentences and paragraphs at text-level.

On the other hand, Rosenblatt (1994:1063) states that:

Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The “meaning” does not reside ready-made “in” the text or “in” the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text.

Finally, Pearson and Stephens (1994:35) define reading as “a complex, orchestrated, constructive process through which individuals make meaning. Reading, so defined,

is acknowledged as linguistic, cognitive, social, and political". Within this definition literacy is not seen as an independent, isolated event. Instead literacy events are determined by the multiple contexts in which they are played out. Knowledge is, therefore, socially constructed. According to Pearson and Stephens (1994), their definition is so defined as they want students to understand that knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore, apart from the educator reading to them, the students also read by themselves and with others – thus they have time to work with and learn from each other. In this way they acquire a perspective of the world through the eyeglass of other cultures. Thus, reading is seen as a 'social practice', a view also articulated by the NLS.

The social, cultural and political background that students come from and the experiences they bring with them are important factors in the acquisition of academic literacy. Pearson and Stephens's definition (1994) takes cognisance of these factors and is, therefore, selected as the definition to be used in guiding the design of the intervention described in Chapter 5. In attempting to understand and explain the fluent reading process, several researchers (Carpenter and Just 1986; Rayner and Pollatsek 1989; Carr and Levy 1990; and Haynes and Carr 1990) proceed by analysing the process in terms of a set of component skills. Thus, the component processes of reading are dealt with in the sections to follow.

2.5.3. The component processes involved in reading

In this section, the component processes involved in reading, namely, the bottom-up processes and the top-down processes are discussed. However, essential to the understanding of the differences in these processes is knowledge of schema theory, which is briefly discussed below.

Schema theory

It is important to note that the role of background knowledge in language comprehension has been studied under the rubric of schema theory²² (Rumelhart 1980). A fundamental belief of schema theory is that texts, (either written or spoken) do not carry meaning by themselves. Rather, texts help direct listeners/readers towards how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. This previously acquired knowledge is the readers' background

²² Bartlett (1932) developed schema theory to explain how background knowledge is used by a reader/listener to understand and recall a text. Bartlett found that when participants read a story from an unfamiliar culture, their memory of the story changed over time to fit schemata from their own culture. Yet it was not until four decades later that more interest was shown in Bartlett's theory (Pitao 1989:1).

knowledge and the previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata. Schemata²³ are pre-existing knowledge structures which are stored hierarchically in the brain, from most general at the top to most specific at the bottom. According to schema theory, the process of interpreting received information involves matching the information with some existing schema within the hierarchy. This principle, therefore, leads to two basic modes of information processing, called bottom-up and top-down processing (Carrell and Eisterhold 1988:77).

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988:79) draw a distinction between formal schemata (background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical organisational structures of different types of texts) and content schemata (background knowledge of the content area of a text). If during reading, the reader is unable to activate an appropriate schema (formal or content), then this would result in difficulty in comprehending the text. The failure to activate an appropriate schema may arise from the fact that the clues provided by the writer in the text are insufficient to activate the schema that the reader already has. Alternately, the reader may not have the appropriate schema anticipated by the writer and, therefore, fails to comprehend. In both these cases, there is a mismatch between the writer's expectations (that is, what the writer thinks the reader can do to get meaning from the text) and the reader's ability (that is, what the reader actually is able to do). This stresses the need for activating the appropriate schemata during text processing (Carrel and Eisterhold 1988:80).

Schema theory has not been without criticisms (Brewer and Treyens 1981, Taylor and Crocker 1981, Sadoski *et al.* 1991). One criticism levelled against schema theory is the vagueness of its definition. Some researchers, for example, Sadoski *et al.* (1991:466) suggest that the term schema is too general and vague, leading to different theorists proposing different formulations of its features, structure, and function. Sadoski *et al.* (1991) further argue that because in schema theory knowledge is seen as being represented abstractly, the roles of imagery and emotional response in reading are ignored. The affective domain is an important consideration during the reading process. As mentioned earlier schemata can be activated either through top-down or bottom-up processing. The 'bottom-up' approach is discussed next.

²³ Other closely related concepts are *scripts*, *plans* and *goals* (Schank and Abelson 1977), *frames* (Minsky 1975), *expectations* (Tannen 1978), and *event chains* (Warren *et al.* 1979). These terms are technically distinct from schemata, but may be thought of as part of the same general, cognitive approach to text processing. According to van Dijk (1981:141) schemata refer to "higher level-

The bottom-up processes in reading

During the 1960s reading was processed mainly through a bottom-up approach (also known as text-based approach or decoding process). This process is data-driven because it makes use primarily of information that is present in the data within a given text (that is, words, phrases, and sentences). As such, it is a passive process involving recognition of the letters and words in a text, thereafter advancing to phrases, clauses and linkages between sentences so as to fully understand the message of the writer (Carrell 1988a:2). In bottom-up processing there is code emphasis with a focus on the rapid and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms, the aim of which is to automatize the identification process in order to allow the reader to think about the larger meaning of the discourse. An assumption which characterises the bottom-up approach is that the reading task can be understood “by examining it as a series of stages that proceed in a fixed order from sensory input to comprehension” (Hudson 1998:46). Three component skills involved in bottom-up processing are decoding, word recognition, and lexical access. Each of these is discussed below.

Decoding refers to the reader's ability to manipulate phoneme-grapheme relationships. It is thought that once readers are able to sound out the letters, they will be able to read the words, and then make meaning of the text. As mentioned previously, according to bottom-up processing, reading occurs via the decoding abilities from the bottom, the physical text on the page, moving up, starting with the smallest units, single letters, letter blends²⁴, and building up towards words and phrases. Thus, readers need to be able to decode successfully for fluent reading. Within the South African context phonics (typically associated with bottom-up approaches) are used to teach children to read in primary schools. In Chapter 1 it was pointed out that while decoding skills are necessary, they are not sufficient for reading comprehension. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Word recognition refers to the reader's ability to recognize words speedily and with automaticity²⁵. Some researchers (Carr and Levy 1990 and Rieben and Perfetti 1991) concur in thinking that speedy word recognition is of greater importance for reading than using prediction, which is more time consuming. Automatic word recognition is

knowledge structures”, functioning as “ideational scaffolding” for organising and interpreting of experience.

²⁴ A word formed by combining parts of other words.

²⁵ Automaticity occurs when the reader is unaware of the reading process. In other words, the reader does not consciously control the process, and uses little processing capacity (Grabe 1991).

also thought to be an important prerequisite for fluent processing of the text (Beck and McKeown 1986, Adams 1990, Stanovich 1991) and many less-skilled readers lack automaticity in lower-level processing. Researchers, for example, Eskey (1988), McLaughlin (1990), and Segalowitz (1991) have stressed the importance of automatic word recognition in L2 contexts. L2 students are often word bound because they are not yet efficient in bottom-up processing. Grabe (1991:391) argues that “students do not simply recognize the words rapidly and accurately, but are consciously attending to graphic form (and in many second language texts there are often far too many new forms for students to attend to efficiently)”. It must be noted that in many schools in South Africa a very limiting approach to the teaching of vocabulary²⁶ is used and vocabulary teaching usually occurs only in the lower grades. This issue is explored further in Chapter 4.

Lexical access refers to the reader's ability to access the meaning of a word from memory. It is related to word recognition. The ability to recognise words rapidly, accurately and effortlessly forms the basis for skilled reading. The distinction between word recognition and lexical access may be important in helping to identify where reading problems lie when learners really struggle to read.

In the bottom-up approach readers do not make predictions about the data in the text. Rather, the meaning of the text is expected to come naturally as the code is broken based on the reader's prior knowledge of words, their meaning, and the syntactical patterns of his/her language (McCormick 1988). For example, in attempting to understand a comprehension passage a reader will analyse the passage by making use of mainly the words and sentences in the passage, without drawing information from his/her background knowledge and experience, that is, his/her hierarchy of schemata (Silberstein 1987:31). Hence, in this approach reading takes place independent of the context and in many instances the reliance on context is seen as a strategy used by poor readers (Nicholson 1993; Perfetti 1995). According to Eskey (1973:172) a strong limitation of the bottom-up approach is that it does not recognize the contribution of the reader to the reading process in the sense that, in practice, students make predictions about a given text based on their knowledge of language and how it works. Despite the criticisms levelled against the bottom-up approach, Eskey (1988:93) argues that bottom-up processing is essential

²⁶ Researchers (Anderson and Freebody 1981; Chall 1987 and Nagy and Herman 1987) have estimated recognition vocabularies for L1 students to range from 10,000 words to 100,000 words. Second language readers require between 2,000 to 7,000 words.

for the “less proficient, developing reader – like most second-language readers”. For example, if a reader does not understand the meanings of words (a component skill of the bottom-up approach) in the text then this would slow down the reading process and also interfere with reading comprehension. An understanding of bottom-up processing is relevant to this research since the primary participants in this study are EAL students.

Droop and Verhoeven (2003:99)²⁷ conducted a study on the influence of children’s developing language proficiency including their lexical knowledge, morphosyntactic knowledge, word decoding skills, and oral text comprehension skills on their developing second language reading comprehension skills. They conclude that

...decoding skills, although highly correlated with reading comprehension, play only a minor role in its development. No effects of reading comprehension on the children’s decoding skills were found. Decoding and reading comprehension appear to develop as independent skills from third grade on. As decoding skills become more automatized, their influence on reading comprehension decreases, and the role of various top-down processes increases.

Droop and Verhoeven’s (2003) argument is particularly relevant to the South African context since in many schools the teaching of reading only occurs in the lower grades with the focus on bottom-up processes. It is generally assumed by educators that once bottom-up strategies are acquired the child will be able to comprehend reading material without much difficulty. There is usually little or no focus on top-down strategies. Yet both bottom-up and top-down strategies are required for reading comprehension. This aspect is explored further in Chapter 6. The top-down approach to reading is discussed in the next section.

The top-down processes in reading

For top-down processing to occur, readers need to have sufficient schemata or background knowledge to enable them to perceive and interpret graphic cues and make predictions about the data they find in a text. Unlike bottom-up processing

²⁷ The participants were one hundred and sixty-three Dutch students, seventy-two Turkish students, and sixty-seven Moroccan students from twenty-one schools in the Netherlands. The medium of instruction in these schools was Dutch. The children were around eight years of age. The aim of Droop and Verhoeven’s (2003:99) study was to explore the influence of the different aspects of the children’s developing language proficiency, including their lexical knowledge, morphosyntactic knowledge, word decoding skills, and oral text comprehension skills on their developing second language reading comprehension skills. Tests were developed for the different aspects to be examined. These tests were administered at three points in time, that is, at the start of Grade 3, the end of Grade 3, and the end of Grade 4. The authors conclude that “reading comprehension can be viewed as a product of word decoding, vocabulary knowledge, morphosyntactic processing, and oral text comprehension”. During

which emphasizes code and is thought to be passive, top-down processing emphasizes meaning and is considered to be an active process as it involves higher order mental concepts and skills such as the knowledge and expectations of the reader. Top-down processing is, therefore, classified as conceptually driven (Carrell and Eisterhold 1988:77). In top-down processing, readers take in larger texts at a time and make predictions by means of contextual cues and prior knowledge. The readers' linguistic, formal and content schemata are important factors (Carrell 1988:4)²⁸. As such, more information is contributed by the reader's prior knowledge than the actual contents of the text (Silberstein 1987). This process allows the reader to select the most productive language cues when reading a text. The top-down approach to reading regards all levels of language as a whole working together unlike the bottom-up approach which divides communication into discrete levels. Three component skills involved in top-down processing are comprehension, inferencing, and synthesis and evaluation skills and strategies. Each of these three component skills are discussed below as they are essential for success in higher education.

Comprehension refers to the understanding process whereby meaning is assigned to the whole text. Research (Rayner and Pollatsek 1989, and Stanovich 1990) shows that readers make fewer identification errors when words are presented in grammatically meaningful sentences rather than in isolation, which suggests that readers do not simply respond to the input word by word. Since comprehension is fundamental to the reading process, and a key element in this study, it is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Inferencing refers to the ability to derive additional knowledge that is not explicitly provided in a text, relying on prior knowledge. According to Pretorius (1996), inferencing enables readers to fill in missing links in the text, to relate elements in the text to some background knowledge, and to integrate information at both the local and global textual levels. Solarsh (2002:71) argues that "answering questions about the text is an intrinsic part of the reading process, and 'good readers' have the ability to deal with both explicit as well as implicit information". She further argues that abstract thinking²⁹, in the absence of concrete stimuli, "draws on world knowledge,

initial stages of literacy acquisition the combined influence of these factors is much stronger for second language readers than for first language readers.

²⁸ For further information see discussion on schema theory in Section 2.5.3 of this Chapter.

²⁹ Abstract thinking skills are skills used to solve problems and answer questions when concrete stimuli are absent.

previous life experiences or formally learnt information". Many EAL students in South Africa do not have the knowledge required or valued in higher education and they are, therefore, severely limited in the extent to which they can derive meaning from texts, and the extent to which they can effectively use reading as a strategy for learning.

Synthesis and evaluation skills and strategies: Fluent readers are not only able to comprehend a text when they read, but are also able to evaluate and compare/synthesize the information from the text with other sources of information. Therefore, synthesis and evaluation skills and strategies are critical components of reading and include the ability of the reader to make predictions which help him/her to anticipate later text development, and the author's perspective as it is presented in the text.

The views expressed by Goodman (1967) and Smith (1971) are associated with the top-down approaches to the reading process. In general, readers reduce their dependence on the print and phonics of the text by making use of their knowledge of syntax and semantics (Hudson 1998). Goodman (1967) lists four processes in reading: predicting, sampling, confirming, and correcting. The reader makes guesses about the meaning of the text, and samples the print to either confirm or disconfirm the predictions. Thus reading is an active process involving not only the reader's knowledge of language, but also the reader's internal concepts of how language is processed, past experiential background and general conceptual background (Hudson 1998:47).

The top-down approach to reading has also been subjected to criticism (Eskey 1988; Samuels and Kamil 1988). For example, Eskey (1988:93) argues that in the top-down approach emphasis is placed on higher-level skills (such as prediction of meaning by means of context clues) at the expense of lower-level skills (such as identification of lexical and grammatical forms). He suggests further that "...in making the perfectly valid point that fluent reading is primarily a cognitive process, they tend to deemphasize the perceptual and decoding dimensions of that process. The model they promote is an accurate model of the skilful, fluent reader, for whom perception and decoding have become automatic" (93). This suggests that the top-down approach is less effective for the less proficient reader. Samuels and Kamil (1988:32) argue that for many texts the reader has little knowledge of the topic, and cannot generate predictions easily. Further, the generating of predictions may be

greater than the amount of time needed for the skilled reader simply to recognize words while reading, meaning that it may be easier for the skilled reader simply to recognize words in the text during reading than to try to generate predictions. Hence, Samuels and Kamil (1988) argue that the top-down approach to reading does not accurately describe skilled reading behaviour.

It must be noted that according to schema theory research, the top-down approach alone does not lead to successful reading. According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1988:77) the data that are needed to fill out the schemata becomes available through bottom-up processing and is facilitated by top-down processing if they are anticipated by or consistent with the reader's conceptual expectations. Carrell (1988a:4) says that

Bottom-up processing ensures that the listeners/readers will be sensitive to information that is novel or that does not fit their ongoing hypothesis about the content or structure of the text; top-down processing helps the listeners/readers to resolve ambiguities or to select between alternative possible interpretations of the incoming data.

The implication of this is that successful reading requires the interaction of both top-down and bottom-up strategies. Therefore, any reading strategy intervention should be designed taking account of both top-down and bottom-up processing. Neither should be seen as an end in itself. The interactive approach is discussed in the section to follow.

The interactive approach to reading

According to Grabe (1991) the phrase "interactive approaches to reading" can be understood from two perspectives. First, the interactive approach is a simple interaction between the reader and the text, whereby the reader uses his prior knowledge and or information from the text to understand the text. Second, the interactive approach is seen as an interaction of top-down and bottom-up processing (Silberstein 1987; Grabe 1991). Here the important contributions of the lower-level (bottom-up) processing skills and the higher-level comprehension/interpretive (top-down) skills are used in combination in analysing and understanding the text. In NLS reading is viewed as an interactive process, but 'interaction' is taken a step further to include the social and cultural practices of the reader.

Although these two perspectives are complementary, some researchers stress the one perspective over the other, or ignore both altogether (Grabe 1991:383). The interactive approach to reading refers to the second perspective. An important aspect of the interactive approach is that the bottom-up and top-down processes should occur at all levels simultaneously. According to this approach, reading starts with the perception of graphic cues and as soon as these are recognized as familiar, both linguistic schemata and world knowledge are brought into play. In the interactive process, texts cannot be considered either generally easy or difficult on the basis of linguistic features; texts become easier if they correspond with the reader's prior knowledge. Thus, failure in reading comprehension can occur if there is a breakdown in compatibility between bottom-up and top-down processes (Silberstein 1987:29). Therefore, some researchers, for example, Silberstein (1987) and Grabe (1991), claim that the interactive approach is the most appropriate approach for successful reading.

It must be noted that while the interactive approach may be successful in developing reading skills, the new literacy approach goes a step further by advocating more than decoding skills or the reader's background knowledge in the process of comprehension. As discussed previously (Section 2.3) with respect to the new literacy approach, reading and/or writing are not treated as separate skills which are isolated from the social and cultural practices of the reader. A socio-cultural view of literacy questions the view that literacy is a generic process that is the same for everyone in all instances. In the socio-cultural view, literacy – and thus reading and writing – is viewed and practiced differently by different social groups, such as students, churchgoers, clerks, and business people. Since differences in the reading ability of EAL students may be attributed to the social context of literacy use in their first languages; this aspect is explored further in Chapters 6 and 7.

Finally, an inappropriate balance between top-down and bottom-up processing leads to a failure in reading comprehension, thereby producing poor readers. For example, a student who has good word recognition skills, but poor inferencing skills will still encounter problems with comprehension as he/she will not be able to fill in the missing links in a text. According to Pretorius (1996:35), poor readers are generally poor scholastic performers. In order to help these students, a better understanding of the nature of their problems is required. This brings me to the next section in which the skills and strategies used by good and poor readers are discussed. This

knowledge will inform educators of the reading abilities of their students as well as the intervention process to be adopted.

2.5.4 Reading skills and strategies of good and poor readers

In this section, a general overview of the differences in skills and strategies between good and poor readers is presented. Raising awareness of the skills and strategies that make a reader either a 'good' or a 'poor' reader is important to the educator as it also points out the negative effects that a lack of any of these skills and strategies might have on the reading ability of the student. Hence, in alerting the educator to the potential reading problems that might be encountered by students, appropriate reading strategy interventions can be put in place in an attempt to improve reading comprehension and ability in general. While only some of the reading strategies which are discussed below are used in the action research component of this study, I nonetheless mention others as it is important for the educator to be aware and to make students aware of the fact that there are a range of strategies that can be used to improve reading comprehension.

Much research has been conducted on reading in a L2 in order to improve the forms of L2 reading instruction. According to Grabe (1991:375) reading is recognized as one of the most important skills in L2 students. Students with well-developed reading skills will make good readers while those with poorly developed reading skills will make poor³⁰ readers. Fluent reading according to Grabe (1991:378) is

- rapid: the reader has to read at a sufficient rate to be able to make connections and inferences in a text,
- purposeful: the reader has to have a purpose for reading,
- interactive: the reader uses both background knowledge and the information from the text,
- comprehending: the reader must understand what he/she is reading,
- flexible: the reader uses a range of strategies for efficient reading, and
- gradually developing: fluent reading results gradually from long term effort.

According to Duke and Pearson (2002), reading is a selective process in the sense that it is not possible to read at a rapid rate by looking at all the words on a page. Therefore, good readers use their previous knowledge and experience when reading to predict information, sample the text and confirm their predictions. On the other

³⁰ Research (for example by Garner 1987; Padron and Waxman 1988; Nist and Mealey 1991) has shown that poor readers use fewer strategies and use them less effectively when reading a text, while good readers are found to be better strategy users. Such studies have also identified groups of variables that appear to characterize good and poor readers. For example, "good readers have been found to have good recognition and lexical access skills, large vocabularies, good syntactic control, integrative and inferential adroitness, and well developed metacognitive skills to monitor and repair their reading. Poor readers are characterized by low functioning of these skills" (Pretorius 1996:45).

hand, a poor reader will read word by word and progress at a very slow rate. From my experience of teaching at tertiary level, many students lack the appropriate background knowledge needed in their disciplines, thus making it difficult for them to succeed academically. This raises awareness of the need for the educator to activate or enrich the student's background knowledge prior to a new lesson (a point that will be considered in my study).

Beginner readers tend to focus on process strategies, for example, word identification, while experienced readers focus on abstract conceptual abilities. The latter make better use of their background knowledge to select only the relevant information from the text needed for confirming and making predictions. Some strategies adopted by fluent readers include varying the reading speed, skimming ahead, taking into account titles, headings, pictures and text structure information (Grabe 1991:377). For example, good readers have a strong knowledge of formal discourse structure. As a result, they make better use of text organisation in comprehending the text than do poor readers. This also allows them to recall information better. Carrell (1984) argues that different cultures may prefer different ways of organising information and, therefore, the comprehension of a text may be culturally dependent according to the way the text is organised. She further argues that training students to recognize the organisational structure of texts improves their ability to recall information. Carrell's argument is particularly relevant within the South African context since EAL students are severely disadvantaged in acquiring knowledge of formal discourse structures due to a lack of exposure to reading materials and would, therefore, benefit greatly from training.

According to many researchers, for example, Rayner and Pollatsek (1989), and Carr and Levy (1990), automatic recognition of information in the text is a necessary skill for fluent readers. A good reader, possessing such skills, is unaware of and does not consciously control the recognition process. Therefore, he/she expends very little effort in achieving success. Poor readers lack such a skill in lower level processing and, therefore, labour on such tasks, for example, word identification skills. These (poor) readers are word bound and not efficient in bottom-up processing. Such readers consciously attend to the graphic forms of words in the text. Further research has shown that good readers not only possess rapid recognition skills but are also precise readers (Grabe 1991:380; Pretorius 1996:45). Many researchers (Perfetti 1985, Stanovich 1986, Adams 1990) see the ability to recognize words rapidly and accurately as an important predictor of reading ability.

Research (Strother and Ulijn 1987; Goulden *et al.* 1990) has also shown that vocabulary knowledge has a significant influence on reading ability. Therefore, fluent readers require not only a sound knowledge of language structure, but also a large recognition vocabulary (Grabe 1991:380). Poor readers with a limited recognition vocabulary are, therefore, restricted in their reading ability. The correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis as it forms an important aspect of the reading intervention trialled as part of the research into reading development.

According to Grabe (1991:381), synthesis and evaluation skills and strategies are vital components of reading ability. With these skills and strategies good readers, apart from merely understanding a text when reading, are able to evaluate the information in the text and compare/synthesize it with other sources. Poor readers are not able to achieve this because of lack of the above-mentioned skills and strategies. Teaching students how to identify the main idea in a paragraph as well as summarizing skills will increase their ability to synthesize and evaluate information. Both of these strategies form part of the action research intervention, as described in Chapter 8.

The ability of a reader to make proper use of metacognitive knowledge and skills is recognized by many researchers as a critical component of good reading (Brown 1980; Schunk and Rice 1992; Schmitt and Hopkins 1993; Hall *et al.* 1999). Metacognitive knowledge and skills allow the good readers to recognize the more important information in a text, adjust their reading rate, skim portions of the text, use context cues to guess the meaning of words, and to summarize information. On the other hand, readers who are not able to use their metacognitive knowledge and skills effectively progress very slowly and are basically poor readers (Schmitt 1990; Grabe 1991; Swanson and De La Paz 1998). Hence, any reading strategy intervention should include metacognitive knowledge.

Pretorius (1996:45) stresses that for comprehension to be successful, the reader must be able to construct a coherent mental representation of what the text is about. Research indicates that poor readers experience difficulty in constructing mental representations. Pretorius (1996) says that poor readers could experience difficulties in the following ways. First, in integrating the meanings of successive sentences and paragraphs, and identifying the main ideas or overall gist in texts. For example, a

study conducted by Yuill and Oakhill (1991) found that poor readers identified the main point in a text only 46% of the time, while good readers were successful 79% of the time. Second, in making inferences, it has been found that poor readers make fewer inferences than good readers (Oakhill and Patel 1991; Oakhill 1994). Third, in interrelating successive topics in a text, in particular, recognizing main ideas and keeping track of them through the text, and fourth, in computing cohesive devices, such as referents for pronouns and verb phrase ellipsis³¹. The difficulties experienced by poor readers as listed by Pretorius (1996) are difficulties that many students at DUT experience.

The storage and processing resources during text processing while reading is called the working memory. It has been found that good readers have better working memory than poor readers. This allows the former to be “richer” readers by making them “generative” in the sense that they are able to interact with the text, handle complexity and create new schemas. This enables them to acquire new background knowledge and enhance their vocabulary (Pretorius 1996:51).

It must be noted that good readers who use their prior knowledge to facilitate the comprehension of texts are not weak at decoding. They also possess very good skills in decoding letters and words rapidly in a bottom-up manner. Therefore, a good reader is one who is able to combine the skills and strategies of both bottom-up and top-down processing when reading a text. As discussed earlier, this is known as the interactive approach to reading. Given the historical legacy of apartheid education in South Africa, it is not surprising that many EAL students do not have adequate skills and strategies required for either bottom-up or top-down processing and, therefore, experience problems in comprehending their academic texts. Finally, according to Swanson and De La Paz (1998:210), students who have difficulty comprehending text need explicit instructions on how to carry out appropriate strategies so that their comprehension improves. Hence, the reason for my reading strategy interventions.

From the above discussion one may conclude that it is essential to identify good and poor readers at the outset in order to determine the type of strategies to be adopted in improving reading comprehension. While a wide range of strategies have been

³¹ Ellipsis refers to the leaving out of words or phrases from sentences where they are unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned (Richards *et al.* 1992:121).

mentioned, in practice the scope of the study will determine the number and types of strategies that can be implemented in the classroom.

2.6 Conclusion

In this Chapter, the understandings of the fundamental concepts of literacy, new literacy and academic literacy were presented. This provides a broad framework within which the reading intervention described in Chapter 5 is situated. It has been pointed out that how we understand literacy has changed, progressing from the autonomous model (where literacy is seen as a set of skills necessary for reading and writing, in isolation of everything else) to the ideological model (where literacy is perceived as a set of social practices within specific contexts). The ideological model gave rise to the concept of new literacy where students are considered as sources of experience and learning, and literacy is treated as a social process involving interactions with society, culture, schooling, and history. The many definitions of academic literacy have also been pointed out. The fact that academic literacy is a very specialized skill has been emphasized. As such, students are required to know the relevant knowledge in a discipline, as well as to use the language of the discipline correctly. This was followed by a presentation of a brief history of L2 reading development in which I pointed out the limitations of the audiolingual approach (with its emphasis on oral language skills) in addressing the needs of EAL students. As pointed out in Chapter 1, while many EAL students acquire BICS in the L2 language, they lack CALP, which is essential in higher education. Drawing from the literature review presented earlier in the Chapter (*c.f.* Sections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4), I argued further that the research undertaken in this thesis fits within the views of the socio-cultural perspective and the era of the engaged reader. The need to consider the social and cultural context of the student as well as affective factors cannot be overemphasised especially in South Africa where students come from such diverse backgrounds. Thereafter, through a presentation of the various definitions of reading, the complexity of reading as a process was described. The complex nature of reading is highlighted further by the fact that there is no formal definition of reading because reading can take on a variety of meanings depending on the context. According to NLS reading (and writing) are social practices. The social, cultural, and political background of the students as well as the experiences they bring with them into the classroom must be considered in any reading intervention programme.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the reading process, the three approaches to reading, namely, the bottom-up approach, the top-down approach,

and the interactive approach were described. The bottom-up approach is seen as a passive process involving the recognition of letters, then words, phrases and eventually sentences. It was argued that the bottom-up approach is beneficial for the less proficient reader. The implication of this is that less proficient readers need to be taught bottom-up strategies. However, bottom-up strategies should not be taught as an end in themselves but combined with top-down strategies. The top-down approach emphasizes meaning and is considered to be an active process as it involves higher order concepts and skills. The third approach discussed was the interactive approach which involves the interaction of both top-down and bottom-up processing. Within new literacy (which forms the framework of this thesis) reading is viewed as an interactive process involving not only top-down and bottom-up processing, but also the social and cultural practices and experiences of the reader. The differences in the skills and strategies between good and poor readers suggests that poor readers use fewer strategies and use them less effectively when reading a text, while good readers use more strategies. Readers who make use of reading strategies effectively are generally good in reading comprehension. The discussion on the differences in the skills and strategies between good and poor readers ends this Chapter. In Chapter 3 the focus on reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategy instruction, and the reading/writing connection is extended.

CHAPTER 3: READING COMPREHENSION

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 I discussed concepts of literacy and reading which are fundamental to this thesis as they form the framework within which the intervention is undertaken. Fundamental to the reading process is reading comprehension, which is the key component of the intervention described in this project. If one does not comprehend what one reads, then the reading exercise becomes pointless. In addition, reading with comprehension is integral for academic success. A discussion of reading comprehension is presented in the first section of this Chapter. I then consider the factors that may influence second language reading since the majority of the participants in this study are either ESL or EAL students. As a result of the difficulties students experience in comprehending academic material, many researchers advocate reading strategy instruction that will help enhance students' reading comprehension. Reading comprehension strategy instruction is, therefore, discussed in the next section where I present a range of reading strategy interventions that have influenced the design of my intervention. Since reading and writing are two complementary processes, I argue in this Chapter that any reading strategy intervention should be coupled with meaningful writing activities. The connection between reading comprehension and writing development is, therefore, considered and concludes the Chapter.

3.2 Definitions of reading comprehension

As a result of the changing approaches to reading as discussed in Chapter 2, the views of what reading comprehension is have changed over the years. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s a number of researchers believed that reading comprehension was an end product of decoding (Fries 1963); if students could identify words then comprehension would occur automatically. However, many educators found that although greater emphasis was placed on decoding, comprehension did not occur (Cooper 1986:5). Reading theorists then felt that educators were asking the wrong type of questions, that is, 'literal questions' and students were not challenged to use their inferential and critical reading and thinking abilities. Thus, educators began asking a greater variety of questions at differing levels. However, educators soon began to realise that asking questions was primarily a means of checking comprehension (Cooper 1986:3). Richards *et al.* (1992:306) identify four types of reading comprehension questions that are often distinguished depending on the purpose and type of reading used. These are: "literal

comprehension¹; inferential comprehension²; critical or evaluative comprehension³; and appreciative comprehension⁴ (Richards *et al.* 1992:306).

In the 1970s and 1980s researchers such as Smith (1978), Sipro *et al.* (1980) and Anderson and Pearson (1984), began to theorize about how a reader comprehends, thus arriving at a new understanding of comprehension. Comprehension was then viewed as a process by which the reader constructs meaning by interacting with the text (Anderson and Pearson 1984). The experiences of the reader, together with the information presented by the author, help the reader understand the text. In other words, the reader is able to relate new information to old information. This interaction between the reader and the text is considered as the foundation of comprehension, thus refuting the old belief that comprehension involves extracting meaning from the printed text.

According to Urquhart and Weir (1998:86-88) the implications of this view are twofold. First, in a classroom where the educator and students come from different cultures, the comprehension of individuals may be different. Second, the desire for the “ideal” comprehension, that is, a reproduction of the “author’s meaning”, does not become a necessity. For, according to exponents of the new literacy approach, a text is based on presuppositions determined from the author’s worldview or ideology. Within the framework of Discourse Analysis, Landesman (1972:6) expresses this in the form of propositions which are not merely meaning of sentences but also objects of thought. These objects of thoughts cannot be identified within the sentences themselves. Rather, they can only be identified within the framework of one’s worldview. It is important for the reader to be aware of such presuppositions and consequently analyze a text in its cultural context. Brown and Yule (1983) refer to propositions as presuppositional pools (*c.f.* Chapter 2). To summarize, according to Urquhart and Weir (1998:88), “It is clear that comprehension cannot be viewed simply as the product of any reading activity. Rather, in any reading situation, comprehension will vary according to the reader’s background knowledge, goals, interaction with the writer ...”. An important consideration is also whether the student is reading in his/her L1 or L2. It must be noted that although the processes of

¹ Literal comprehension: Reading in order to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly contained in a passage (Richards *et al.* 1992).

² Inferential comprehension: Reading in order to find information that is not explicitly stated in the passage, using the reader’s experience and instruction, and by referring (inferencing) (Richards *et al.* 1992).

³ Reading in order to compare information in a passage with the reader’s own knowledge and values.

⁴ Reading in order to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response from a passage.

reading in a L1 and reading in a L2 share a number of basic elements, there are also significant differences. The next section examines some of these differences and also discusses the key factors that influence L2 reading. These factors will be borne in mind and attention will be given to them throughout the thesis, in particular, during the ethnographic component of the intervention where I explore students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing.

3.3 Factors influencing second language reading comprehension

Knowledge of the factors influencing second language (L2) reading comprehension is very important for the educator (especially within the South African context where the majority of the students are ESL or EAL students). Through an educator's own experience, an awareness of the relevant literature, and sensitivity to the types of reading problems encountered by L2 readers, the educator is better prepared to cope with the reading problems experienced by L2 readers. Although much research since the mid-1970s has helped in understanding the nature of L2 reading acquisition, there are still questions about how people learn to read in their L1/L2. In certain areas of reading acquisition there have been contradictory results. For example, while some studies indicate that reading proficiency in a L1 has little influence on reading proficiency in a L2, other studies show that there is a correlation between the two (Aebbersold and Field 1997:22).

Many researchers, for example, Grabe (1991) and Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998), have noted a number of factors/conditions that may influence the L2 reading of second language readers. It is important for both educators and researchers to be aware of these factors so that they can understand the readers' reading behaviours and, as such, educators will be able to help their students understand these behaviours as well. Researchers will be able to use this information to engage in further research. Some of these factors are discussed below.

3.3.1 Cognitive development and cognitive style

Researchers, for example, Hatch (1983) and Segalowitz (1986), have agreed that the cognitive or mental development levels at the beginning of learning a L2 may have an influence on the reading process. For example, a ten-year-old who is just beginning to learn a L2 will use different learning strategies from a twenty-year-old who is also learning a L2. The cognitive or mental developmental levels of these two students will be influenced by their L1 reading levels, their world knowledge, the reading strategies acquired in their L1 and most other aspects of the reading process

(Aebersold and Field 1997:24). Thus, L2 reading should be considered in relation to the age of the reader and the L1 language level of the student at the start of the L2 study. Within the South African context, many ESL students only begin learning English (which is the medium of instruction) when they enter school, that is, around the age of six to seven years. Often, English is used by the student in class only (and when absolutely necessary). As a result, I have noted from my years of lecturing experience that many students do not have adequate practice in the language and struggle throughout their education to cope with academic tasks. Further, many of these students have not had much exposure to books in their L1 (thus not having the opportunity to develop their reading ability and their competence in their L1).

The cognitive (learning) style of the student also needs to be taken into account as these may influence the way the student acquires and processes information (Carrell 1988b). Each person has a preferred learning style and this could be conscious or unconscious. For example, impulsive students tend to think in abstract ways, are often able to understand the main principles of the dynamics of second language acquisition and, therefore, are able to understand and learn the underlying language system more easily (Oxford and Ehrman 1993:197). Reflective students, on the other hand, make slower, calculated and accurate responses, and show a preference for working at their own pace and achieve their goals (Oxford and Ehrman 1993:197; Brown 1994:112). These styles have implications for second language acquisition. For example, Kagan (1965 in Brown 1994:112), found that reflective students tend to make fewer errors in reading than impulsive students; and Goodman (1970:499) found that impulsive readers are faster readers who display a mastery of “the psycholinguistic guessing game” of reading without sacrificing their comprehension skills. In addition, Abraham (1981) concluded that reflective students perform poorly in proof reading tasks; and Jamieson (1992:492) found that impulsive students were better language students. Both styles then, appear to have their advantages in the different aspects of second language acquisition. Therefore, it is important for educators to be aware of the various cognitive (learning) style differences of their students. Also of importance, is knowing when students are using inappropriate strategies. For example, a student who always translates every word in a text will have difficulty in skimming and scanning. Some students may not be able to manage ambiguity in the meaning of a text and would need to constantly stop, check meanings of words, ask questions or get help (Ehrman and Oxford 1990:311). Thus, educators who are aware of the above learning styles and strategies will be able to

identify them in their students reading behaviour. As such, they then can help students understand how their cognitive style shapes the way they handle a text and also, if possible, help students adjust by modifying their style for the purpose of the reading task at hand. The next section considers the effect of reading proficiency in the L1 on the development of L2 reading proficiency.

3.3.2 Reading proficiency in the L1 and L2

Many researchers, for example, Groebel (1980) and Anderson (1994), have argued that the level of reading proficiency in the L1 also seems to be a factor in the development of L2 reading skills. These researchers are of the view that successful L2 reading requires the transfer of old skills, rather than the learning of new ones. Thus, failure in L2 reading is attributed to poor reading ability in L1. As such, reading instruction should focus on teaching 'good' reading skills and strategies that are lacking in the first language (Ulijn and Salager-Meyer 1998:82). Within the South African context many EAL readers do not acquire reading proficiency in their L1 and, therefore, have no or very little reading skills to transfer to English, which is the medium of instruction in most schools and higher education institutions. Fuller *et al.* (1995:21)⁵ found that their participants' reading comprehension in English was not impressive. However, their written proficiency in the home language was somewhat better compared to their English performance, but not high. They, therefore, conclude that literacy in the mother-tongue is highly correlated with proficiency in English. Within the South African context, Balfour (2000) conducted a study on reading and writing among tertiary students. He found vast differences in the results of L1, L2, and foreign language speakers with the English L1 speakers performing better than the other two groups of students (*c.f.* Chapter 4, Section 4.4). As mentioned earlier, many of our students (in South Africa) have not been exposed to much reading either in their L1 or L2. As a result, their use of reading strategies is limited. Ideally, reading strategy instruction for such students should begin at early stages of schooling. However, from my teaching experience, the teaching of reading

⁵ The study by Fuller *et al.* (1995:16) was conducted nine months prior to the 1994 elections. A total of about nine thousand households were selected to participate in their survey which enquired about the household's economic activities and social attributes. One in every six households visited participated in an assessment of basic literacy skills. One adult (older than eighteen years) and one adolescent (between three and eighteen years) were tested. The test included fourteen items which assessed language comprehension and numeracy at about Grade 7 level. Eight comprehension items were included, four in the mother-tongue and four in English. The first two items were read orally by the enumerator. The respondents were asked to read a short passage in the mother-tongue and respond to comprehension questions, then a passage in the mother-tongue was read and comprehension examined. The examinations were conducted in either one of the following nine mother-tongue languages: Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, Pedi, South Sotho, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda and Zulu.

strategies is not done adequately and many students enter tertiary level unable to make use of appropriate reading strategies.

Although there has been some consensus that L1 reading ability transfers to L2 reading, according to Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998:82), there is much debate about how and when it does so. Studies conducted by some researchers, for example, Clarke⁶ (1980), Cziko⁷ (1980), and Devine (1987), have shown that the readers' L2 reading ability and strategy use are dependent upon L2 proficiency. From these studies, it would appear that apart from a threshold proficiency⁸ in the L1, readers would need to also acquire a certain threshold level in L2 proficiency in order for the comprehension processes used in their L1 to be transferred effectively to their L2 reading.

Leading researchers in the field, for example, Alderson and Urquhart (1984), Silberstein (1987), Coady (1993), and Chun and Plass (1996) suggest that in order to explain reading problems in a L2, a balance of the above two viewpoints be adopted, that is, "a balanced and critical interaction between language proficiency on the one hand, and reasoning processes and reading ability on the other" (Ulijn and Salager-Meyer 1998:83). Another factor that is claimed to influence L2 reading is the degree of difference between the writing systems and structures of the L1 and L2. These factors are discussed in the section to follow.

3.3.3 *Degrees of difference between the L1 and the L2*

Research (Alderson 1984; Grabe 1991; Scarcella and Oxford 1992) has shown that differences between the writing systems and rhetorical structures of the L1 and the L2 may be another factor in L2 reading. Orthographic systems vary between languages and this has often been cited as a likely cause of difficulties (Hudson 1998). Readers who use the same alphabet or writing systems in their L1 as in their L2 will have less to learn and reading would be easier. Similarly, readers who use a

⁶ Clarke (1980) found that poor readers in their native Spanish use more syntactic cues and less semantic cues than the good readers. However, in reading English the good readers and poor readers (in Spanish) performed equally poorly, with the former using significantly less semantic cues (in comparison to the usage in reading in Spanish). Clarke (1980) attributed this drop in performance of the good readers to their limited proficiency in the L2.

⁷ Cziko (1980) compared the reading strategies of limited and advanced English proficiency French students reading in English with those of native speakers. His findings were similar to those of Clarke (1980). In particular, the readers who had a higher proficiency in English L2 employed better reading strategies.

⁸ A students' threshold level is a basic level of competency in the L1. This level is also sometimes called *ceiling* (Clarke 1988) or underlying *proficiency threshold* (Cummins 1981). These researchers say that the threshold level may be the key to the amount of transfer that occurs from L1 to L2.

limited number of symbols in their L1, and are exposed to much more symbols in their L2, will need more time to become proficient. Coady (1997:287) argues that for the comprehension of advanced, authentic, academic texts, the reader should have a good knowledge of at least 5 000 words in the L2. If the students' L1 orthographic tradition is different from that of the L2, they face an additional challenge, as orthographic differences contribute to slow and inefficient word recognition. In KwaZulu-Natal many EAL students are isiZulu⁹ speakers. IsiZulu differs from English in many ways. IsiZulu is an agglutinative¹⁰ language while English is disjunctive. According to Wade (1997), the two principal areas of differences are the vowel system and the phonotactics. He reports that the English vowel system is more complex than the relatively simple isiZulu vowel system. In addition, isiZulu like other African languages is a tone language. A tone language uses, for example, high and low tone or pitch to distinguish words with similar speech sounds. English, on the other hand, is an intonational language¹¹. Grabe (1991:388) also cites linguistic differences at syntactic and discourse levels as a possible problem for L2 students. In research conducted by Bernhardt (1987), German readers were found to focus more attention on function words than fluent readers in English, suggesting that German readers need to pay more attention to syntactic information encoded into functional words. English readers, on the other hand, tend to focus more attention on content words. Other researchers, for example, Mitchell *et al.* (1990), argue that syntactic parsing strategies may vary according to different languages and that certain strategies for reading will be language-specific rather than universal. Research conducted by Carrell (1984) shows that on a discourse level students from different language backgrounds are able to recall information better, but this appeared to be dependent on the different organisational structures of texts (*c.f.* Chapter 2). She therefore concludes that different cultures may have different preferences on ways of organising information. Thus, the organisation of the text which may be culturally dependent may affect comprehension (Grabe 1991:388), which brings me to a discussion on the importance of the influence of cultural orientation on L2 reading.

⁹ According to the 2001 Census only 8.2% of South Africans speak English at home. In contrast nearly a quarter (23.8%) of the population gave isiZulu as their home language followed by isiXhosa (17.6%) (Statistics South Africa).

¹⁰ In isiZulu morphemes are glued together to form a word or a sentence, for example, the equivalent for "I am still working" in isiZulu would be Ngisasebenza. Further, in isiZulu all the nouns belong to a certain class. In the structure of the isiZulu language there are differences between singular and plural forms. For instance, in commands such as: hello (sawubona) [singular] or (sanibonani) [plural], the ending depending on whether you are speaking to one person or more than one (Wade 1997).

¹¹ Pitch contours apply to utterances as a whole rather than individual lexical items (Wade 1997).

3.3.4 Cultural orientation

In many instances (in post apartheid South Africa), the students that we teach come from different cultural backgrounds. Since cultural orientation¹² influences a range of reading behaviours, beliefs, and performance, it is extremely important that educators be aware of the cultural differences among their students and also the different ways these differences may affect reading behaviour. According to Aebersold and Field (1997:28), cultural differences make up the largest category of factors that influence L2 reading. These factors include the reader's attitude towards text and purpose for reading; the types of reading skills and strategies used in the L1 and in the L2; beliefs about the reading process; and content and formal schemata. These factors, some of which will be explored in the ethnographic interviews conducted as part of my intervention, will be discussed below beginning with the reader's attitude towards the text and purpose for reading.

Attitudes towards the text and purpose for reading

The reader's attitude towards a text is shaped by his/her cultural orientation. As an example, those who learn to read by reading sacred scriptures usually have the belief that texts equal truth. Further, some students may come from a culture where all written material represents 'truth'. These students tend to memorize knowledge and would not challenge or reinterpret texts in the light of other texts (Grabe 1991:389). Students who have learnt to read by having stories read to them, and who were encouraged to imagine, question, and interpret texts usually develop the academic reading skills that are expected in higher education. For such students, challenging a text is seen as a normal academic activity (Abersold and Field 1991). On the other hand, students coming from an oral or story-telling tradition usually are not exposed in the above manner and come with different assumptions about interacting with the text. Thus, many of them encounter difficulties in academic settings (Heath 1983). Within the South African context, the majority of Black South Africans, for whom English is not their L1, come from such backgrounds.

The types of reading skills and strategies used in the L1 and L2

The review of literature presented thus far, and in particular, the new literacy approach, stresses that readers bring their own beliefs, cultural training and

¹² The definition of culture as being "a total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour, and social habits of the members of a particular society" is used in this thesis. According to Condon (1973:4), culture "is a system of integrated patterns, most of which remain below the threshold of consciousness, yet all which govern human behaviour just as surely as the manipulated strings of a puppet control its motions".

educational experiences to the reading process. Therefore, the strategies readers develop will depend on the values and attitudes of their culture toward reading and also toward reading in a L2. In some instances students may have the same cultural background, but may come from different schooling systems¹³. The schools they attend may or may not have placed emphasis on tasks such as identifying salient points in a paragraph/text, predicting, inferencing or understanding rhetorical structures or discourse patterns. As pointed out in Chapter 3, in South African schools reading is usually only taught in the foundation phases with a focus on decoding skills and with little or no focus on the teaching of reading strategies. In addition, some students may come from societies where reading is not emphasized as an activity, for example, in many African families of traditionally oral cultural backgrounds. These students might often not be aware of and, therefore, grapple with language issues and reading strategies. In some cultures, for example, those associated with western societies, readers are encouraged to think about the reading strategies and processes, hence making them conscious. Other cultural groups may not do so, for example, the Zulu culture¹⁴. Thus, it is the task of the educator to make students aware of these strategies and processes. In this research study, in teaching reading strategies to the students, they will be encouraged to engage continuously with reading strategies and processes they use during reading.

The demands for reading in a L2 depend on the level and nature of the reading task. The skills and strategies needed for success in higher education may include aspects such as inferencing, predicting, understanding ambiguity, and synthesizing information from various texts. Various factors may influence the use of skills and strategies. For example, limited access to texts or even libraries and differing cultural attitudes about what types of reading are important will determine the strategies beginning readers would use and develop. With regards to differing cultural attitudes, children (pre-or primary school going age) who learn reading by reciting religious texts (for example, the Koran or the Bible) may be proficient at decoding skills. Children who read stories and are questioned on various aspects of the story (such as, plot and characters) may learn to use predicting and selecting strategies.

¹³ The schooling system in South Africa consists of private and public schools. Prior to 1994, the public schools were racially segregated and differently resourced (*c.f.* Freer (1992) for more information on the schooling system in South Africa prior to 1994). The four major racial groupings were Africans, Coloureds, Indians, and Whites. The schools for each of the race groups were managed by independent education departments. The African and Coloured schools were least supported in terms of resources and appropriately qualified teachers (Tunmer and Muir 1968; Freer 1992). Despite the attempts by the present government to address these imbalances, the negative effects of the past disparities are yet to be fully eliminated.

¹⁴ In Zulu culture emphasis is traditionally placed on oral forms of communication.

Beliefs about the reading process

One's own beliefs can also have an influence on teaching and learning. For example, the belief that the educator has about the reading process will determine his/her reading instruction. To illustrate this further, an educator who believes that teaching strategies are important will include the teaching of strategies in his/her lesson. On the other hand, an educator who believes that memorization of texts and recitation of passages are important will teach accordingly. Cultural beliefs about what comprehension means also differ. For example, in some cultures comprehension may mean having the ability to explain the structure and grammar in a passage or text. In other cultures, it may mean having the ability to summarize the argument in a chapter or the entire book in a few sentences. Educators often ingrain these cultural beliefs and attitudes in students during their early schooling years and the same beliefs are then carried into higher education settings. Sometimes these attitudes and beliefs are also transferred to the L2 reading process (Aebbersold and Field 1997:31). Apart from beliefs about the reading process, the students' background knowledge will also influence the reading process.

Formal and content schemata

As discussed in Chapter 2, formal schemata refer to background knowledge of the organisational structures of different types of texts while content schemata refer to the background knowledge of the content area of a text. Since the publication of Kaplan's (1966) research on cultural thought patterns, much research has been done focusing on the different types of texts in different cultures as well as the way these texts are organised. Some of these researchers, for example, Purves and Hawisher (1986), and Li (1992), have shown that the beliefs about the organisation and development of "good" writing are shaped by culture. These cultural beliefs will determine the way students perceive the text they are reading.

Over the years there has been agreement among researchers (Johnson 1982; Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Barnett 1989; Pritchard 1990) that background knowledge is an important factor in reading. Research conducted by Roller (1990) shows that background information is most helpful with a text that is not very familiar. It is the task of the educator to be aware of the amount of background information that is necessary, and to make this information available to students.

For fluent reading it is necessary for the reader to relate the text to his/her content schemata. A possible reason for this not taking place, therefore leading to poor

reading, is that schemata are culturally specific, and as such may not be part of the reader's own cultural background. Research, for example, by Carrell and Eisterhold (1988:80), has shown that the cultural content knowledge implied by a text interacts with the reader's own content schemata. When there is a close match between these two, comprehension is enhanced. The reader is able to recall more, read faster and make predictions, which are consistent with the author's intended meaning. However, if they are from two cultural settings then the reader is not able to relate to the text and, therefore, has difficulties in comprehension. Similarly, Lanham *et al.* (1995:10) in their discussion about spoken communication between persons from different groups make a distinction between intelligibility¹⁵ and comprehensibility. The concepts of intelligibility and comprehensibility are largely dependent on the difference between the literal meaning and the conveyed meaning¹⁶ of a text.

In view of these differences in L2 reading, findings from research with L1 students cannot always be applied to L2 contexts. Thus, further research on the reading of L2 students is essential. Grabe (1991:394) suggests that one area of L2 reading, among others that need to be explored, is reading comprehension strategy instruction. Reading comprehension strategy instruction is a focus in this thesis and is, therefore, discussed in the next section.

3.4 Reading comprehension strategy instruction

Many researchers, for example, Durkin (1979) and Duffy and McIntyre (1982), have criticized the way in which educators teach reading comprehension. In a study conducted by Durkin (1979)¹⁷, she observed that in Grade 4 classrooms only 1% of the total time devoted to reading instruction was spent explicitly teaching students to comprehend texts. This consisted of monitoring students' comprehension by merely asking questions at the end of a reading passage. No specific procedures were taught to help students improve their comprehension skills. The observation by Durkin (1979) highlights that little importance that is placed on reading¹⁸ and stresses

¹⁵ Intelligibility relates to the perception and recognition of linguistic form. For a message to be comprehensible, it must contain appropriate cues to the meaning to be inferred which the reader uses to understand the meaning (Lanham *et al.* 1995).

¹⁶ Conveyed meaning is the meaning that is explicitly present and which is implicitly inferable (Lanham *et al.* 1995).

¹⁷ Durkin (1979) conducted an extensive study of the manner in which comprehension instruction took place in Grades 3 to 6 classrooms. She observed that educators were interrogators and assignment givers and in between the questions and assignments little instruction took place.

¹⁸ This point was also discussed in Chapter 1 of the thesis.

the need for awareness raising in reading comprehension strategies in order to enhance reading comprehension.

As a result of the above concerns, theorists and researchers have developed numerous strategies that can be taught directly to students to help them improve their reading comprehension¹⁹. Some of these strategies include students being shown different models, frameworks or strategies for understanding and interpreting written information as well as being taught self-regulatory procedures such as self-monitoring and self-questioning. Harris and Graham (1996) say that these strategies may be taught as scaffolds, which support and facilitate the learning process as students internalise procedures, or make discoveries through trial and error in order to complete comprehension tasks successfully.

Reading strategies should be taught in contexts that are relevant and appropriate for their use, that is, they should be integrated as part of the curriculum. This view is in keeping with the new literacy approach which promotes the development of authentic reasons for reading a text and where students are seen as authors and meaning makers (*c.f.* Chapter 1). According to Pressley *et al.* (1995) students will learn to use strategies as the need arises and when a particular set of heuristics is appropriate for the task that is assigned. Moreover, they argue that instruction should not be limited to teaching students the strategies that skilful readers use. Instruction has to go beyond this in that it must instil within the student a positive attitude towards reading. Various reading comprehension techniques could be used to assist students with their reading material, thus enabling them to cope and consequently to develop positive attitudes. While there is a wealth of research on the teaching of reading strategies, in the next section I provide a brief survey of selected studies that attempt to improve reading comprehension by teaching reading strategies. These studies are discussed as they have influence on the design of the reading strategy interventions described in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.4.1 Reading strategy interventions

In this section an overview of a few reading comprehension interventions will be given. The literature on reading comprehension instruction is vast and it is not possible within the scope of this thesis to summarize all the information available. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I will discuss a few interventions,

¹⁹ See for example, Sturgell (1992); Hesse (1994); Casteel *et al.* (2000), and Falk-Ross (2002).

highlighting salient issues that inform my study. An important aspect to note is that almost all of these studies stress the importance of teaching reading strategies to improve reading comprehension. Within the South African context, two studies in particular that will inform my research were conducted by Du Plooy (1995) and Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998). Both these researchers implemented specific reading strategies in order to improve reading comprehension and, as indicated in Chapter 1, my research involves the teaching of three reading strategies: identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text, using context clues to guess the meaning of words, and summarizing.

Du Plooy (1995:2) studied four reading strategies, in particular, guessing the meanings of words from the context, identifying the main idea in a passage, making inferences and generalizing. The aim of her study was to determine whether the teaching of the four strategies would contribute to the improvement of reading comprehension. Her subjects were two Standard 7 classes (Grade 9)²⁰, each consisting of 30 ESL students²¹. A quasi-experimental, non-randomized, pre-test and post-test design was used. The independent variables were the four reading strategies while the dependent variable was the students' reading comprehension ability. Two reading comprehension tests were used as pre-and post texts. These tests were adapted from exercises in Wiener and Bazerman's (1988) handbook. Their handbook consists of generic exercises based primarily on Western/European history and life experiences, much of which would be far removed from South African students' experiences. It would seem that Du Plooy (1995:71) acknowledges this point in her study when she suggests that appropriate exercises must be used so that the lessons become more meaningful.

Two lessons were developed for the teaching of each strategy. In the first lesson, the strategy was explained and students were taught how to use it. An exercise was also provided. In the second lesson, students were provided with an exercise that they had to complete on their own. This gave them practice on reinforcing what they

²⁰ Within the South African context, the explicit teaching of reading strategies is rarely given attention in higher education. Consequently, there is very little literature to draw on to inform best practice. Therefore the study conducted by Du Plooy (1995) at secondary school level can serve as a basis for information.

²¹ These students were aged between 13-16 years. One class was the randomly assigned experimental group and the other class was the control group. The subjects in the experimental group received strategy training whereas the control group were taught using the traditional method, that is, by reading the passage, answering the questions, marking their responses as correct or incorrect in accordance with the educator's answers. On the other hand, various techniques were used with the experimental group to focus students' attention on the target strategies. Students had to identify strategies used, determine how and where to implement them, and practise them (Du Plooy 1995:61).

had learnt in lesson one. The treatment period lasted for two weeks, after which both groups had to complete a post-test. The results of both groups were then compared. Follow up interviews were conducted with all students in the experimental group (Du Plooy 1995:62).

The results²² indicated that there was only a marginal improvement in reading comprehension after the teaching of the four reading strategies. Improvement was noted in the use of only two strategies, that is, guessing the meaning of words from the context, and identifying the main idea in a passage. Interviews with the students indicated that factors such as short attention or concentration span, attitude towards reading comprehension, and the short treatment period (two weeks) could have influenced the results. Students felt they needed more instruction, practice and feedback before they would be able to use the strategy inferencing and generalizing successfully (Du Plooy 1995:63). These are important factors that need to be taken into account in the designing of my reading strategy intervention. Du Plooy (1995) did not seem to place much emphasis on the process that she took students through during the intervention period. Her focus seemed to be on the “end product”. Feedback from the students was obtained only at the end of the intervention period rather than after the teaching of each reading strategy. Further, because of the short treatment period, it would appear that not much emphasis was placed by Du Plooy (1995) on raising students’ levels of metacognitive awareness so that they could have better control over the reading process. Metacognition is important for increasing students’ motivation levels (Paris and Winograd 1990; Schmitt 1990; Oxford and Ehrman 1993). Further, as indicated in Chapter 2, metacognition is recognized as a critical component of good reading. Metacognitive knowledge and skills allow the good reader to recognize the most important information in a text, use context clues to guess the meaning of words, and summarize information adequately. In my study, during the explicit teaching of reading strategies, attempts are made to raise students’ levels of metacognitive awareness. Metacognition was taken into account in the study conducted by Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998).

In Kaplan-Dolgoy’s (1998:40) study, ten ‘at risk’ first year L2 tertiary students were taught a combination of metacognitive strategies (that is, metacognitive awareness, self-regulation, and monitoring) and cognitive strategies (identification of the main

²² The author analyzed the data by means of SAS statistical program (SAS Institute Inc. 1988). A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed significantly from each other (Du Plooy 1995:62).

idea, summarization, note taking and listening for the supporting idea whilst note taking)²³.

The researcher used a combination of four instructional approaches which incorporate metacognition, namely direct explanation, scaffolded instruction, cognitive coaching and cooperative learning. Thus, instruction involved telling/informing, modelling, and providing practice opportunity with guidance and feedback. The intervention programme was structured in four interlinked phases. The texts used were adapted from the students' L2 sociopedagogics textbooks. In analysing the data, the researcher found that there was an overall improvement in students' reading comprehension²⁴. Therefore, in light of her findings, Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998:250) concludes "the reading and listening comprehension problems of L2 tertiary students can be effectively addressed by means of a metacognitive and cognitive intervention programme". In her study, Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998) did not allow for written/reflective feedback from students as to whether they understood the strategies and processes taught. Further, she does not take into account the importance of using reading/writing activities to promote reading comprehension. Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998) points out, as a limitation to her study, her neglect of measuring students' metacognitive awareness prior to her interventions. This, she says, can be done by means of a questionnaire or a ranking scale.

The shortcomings of the pedagogical approaches used by Du Plooy (1995) and Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998) were not only noted, but also informed the design of the interventions used in my research study. Hence, the interventions were designed to raise metacognitive awareness with the explicit teaching of reading strategies over a

²³ A quasi-experimental design was used in this study. The subjects who were studying sociopedagogics were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group. The researcher co-taught the experimental group with their regular mainstream lecturer while the control group had to study on their own. The intervention programme was conducted three times a week over a period of four weeks. The lesson length varied from two to three hours. Six weeks after intervention the students wrote their sociopedagogics examinations. Both groups wrote a pre-and post-test designed by the researcher which focused on main idea identification and summarizing abilities.

²⁴ For identifying the main idea after instruction using metacognitive and cognitive techniques, the findings show that there was a highly significant difference between the pre-and post-test scores of the experimental group, and a significant difference for the control group. However, the mean difference for the experimental group was 67.50 and the control group was 32.50. Highly significant differences were obtained for the experimental group only when applying the deletion rule, providing a controlling idea for a summarization passage, benefiting from instruction in the use of a summarizing technique, and benefiting from instruction in note taking for reading. Significant differences were obtained for the experimental group only in writing a summary, applying the superordination rule, and identifying the controlling idea in a listening passage. There was a significant difference for both groups in identifying the main idea in a listening passage. However, the mean difference for the experimental group was higher (45.00) as compared to the control group (17.50) Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998:249).

sustained period of time. Moreover, integrated reading and writing activities were used, and allowance made for sufficient reflection from students.

Similar instructional approaches as used by Du Plooy (1995) and Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998) were used by other researchers, but with slight variations in their research. For example, Casteel *et al.* (2000:68) present a practical plan for improving reading comprehension and reader self-efficacy (judgements about one's ability to perform) through transactional strategies instruction (TSI, that is, teaching students to use a range of strategies by asking how, why, and when). The authors argue that strategy instruction alone is not enough to produce maximum reading growth. They also place emphasis on affective factors, which results in deeper engagement with the text thus resulting in superior reading. Although reader self-efficacy *per se* is not an aspect that is addressed in this thesis, its importance needs to be recognized²⁵. Other affective factors, for example, reading and writing attitudes, and practices and motivation levels of students will be focused on. Further, helping students with their reading comprehension is one way of increasing positive perceptions about reading. This point is re-inforced by Bamford and Day (1998:30) when they say "successful reading experiences promote positive attitudes towards reading which in turn motivate further reading".

In their study, Casteel *et al.* (2000) used as their participants twenty Grades 4 to 6 students who were enrolled in a university summer reading 'clinic'. The purpose of this study was to determine if TSI would improve students' comprehension and their views of themselves as readers. TSI has three phases of instruction, namely, explanation and modelling, practice and coaching, as well as transfer of responsibility. These three phases of instruction are particularly important as similar phases will be used in my research design in combination with raising students' levels of metacognitive awareness.

In the first phase, that is, explanation and modelling, the educator defines, explains and models various strategic procedures, emphasizing what the strategies are and when and how they are helpful. In the second phase, practice and coaching, students practice using the strategies. The educator coaches by asking practice questions where necessary. For example, questions such as "Why did you choose

²⁵ Research on readers' self-efficacy (Henk and Melnick 1995:471) has shown that "reader self-perceptions can affect an individual's overall orientation to the process of reading, influence choice of activities, affect continued involvement and ultimately affect achievement".

that strategy?”, “How is it helpful?”, and “How did you know what to do?” can be asked. These types of questions allow students to evaluate their choice of strategy and their responses can also serve as modelling for other students. In the third phase, transfer and responsibility, the responsibility falls on the student for selecting and applying strategies. Not much guidance is provided by the educator but students can still model strategies for their peers. The duration of the first two phases will vary depending on individual students. The third phase should only begin when students become metacognitively capable of strategy selection, use, and evaluation.

Casteel *et al.* (2000) suggest the use of a few selected strategies²⁶ (a point that will be considered in my study as the teaching of too many strategies during an intervention cycle might confuse or overwhelm students). Once students master the use of these strategies, it would become easier for them to learn additional strategies or even develop strategies of their own. The method used to evaluate TSI is also relevant for this thesis. The authors suggest that evaluation of TSI should emphasise the process and not the product. Authentic measures such as audio-taped responses of students during lessons, anecdotal notes on student performance during discussion of reading material, educator-student conferences, writing self-reflective journal entries, and creating student checklists can be used as evaluation tools.

In the above studies, very little or no mention is made of the importance of using writing activities to enhance reading comprehension and *vice versa*. It is important to note that reading and writing are complementary processes (see Section 3.5 of this Chapter)²⁷. One study where reading and writing projects were used to improve reading comprehension was conducted by Falk-Ross (2002) where the I-Search paper was used to develop students' reading comprehension strategies. I-Search consists of the writing on a topic that is uniquely important to the student²⁸.

²⁶ Here the strategies selected were prediction, monitoring and fix-up, question answering, summarizing, organizing and personal application of information.

²⁷ Given that writing activities form an integral part of the academic literacy course at DUT, they will be used in my research.

²⁸ The subjects consisted of four fine art students aged between 18 and 22 years who were enrolled for a voluntary class called College Reading. These students joined these classes because of their poor performances on a reading test and had difficulties in reading comprehension. A syllabus was designed for them to include teaching and learning activities to improve reading comprehension in a classroom context in which the reading-writing research connections were made clear. The assignments included inquiry-based research (the I-Search project), independent and shared reading events, and direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies (Falk-Ross 2002:280).

For the I-Search project each student chose a topic they were interested in and that was related to their college major. They then helped each other to shape, narrow, and focus the questions that would drive the inquiry. Thereafter students gathered data through varied experiences, namely, interviews with college professors using guided questions concerning reading and writing advice, internet searches, online discussions among students and experts, and journal references. Students received instruction on how to use these sources and on how to comprehend the data. Their progress was monitored on a weekly basis and through three successive drafts. It must be noted that although the topics chosen were related to the student's college major, which is a step towards integration, it is not clear whether the project given to students formed part of a departmental project or was only designed for the purposes of the College Reading class. In order for lessons to be more meaningful to students they should be given their departmental projects to work on during the additional lessons. In this way students do not perceive the task as being an 'add on' task²⁹.

The findings of this study revealed changes in several areas of development in the students' reading comprehension strategies and their application to newly learned information thus stressing the need for integrated reading and writing activities. It was found that students' recalling became more focused, more critical, and more productive. The author noted these changes in students' individual contributions through classroom discourse participation, in small group meetings, and in completion of assignments (Falk-Ross 2002:283). The researcher attributes the success of this study to the integrated nature of the reading and writing assignments.

As indicated earlier, the above review of the different studies is used to inform the design and the pedagogical approaches to be used in my research. Although I have

²⁹ The direct instruction of reading strategies included the teaching of text structure organisation, skimming, vocabulary analysis, and note taking strategies. The students' progress was monitored through writing activities such as journal entries, application exercises and drafts of students' I-Search papers. Ongoing discussions were held on strategies for improving reading comprehension through prior knowledge, fluency rate, accuracy, word identification, vocabulary analysis, note taking and test taking. Students were made aware of the importance of understanding the author's perspective and tone and of becoming critical readers. Each week text passages were used for exercises in specific areas of reading comprehension. Students were introduced to new strategies for reading comprehension. These were discussed and students were allowed to share their experiences. The data for this study comprised field notes of class events, participant observations, audio tapes of class members' discussions, and literacy artefacts consisting of students' work. The data analysis was consistent with the methodology of action research through educator inquiry, cycles or spirals of observation, and action. Ongoing formative analysis of discourse samples and descriptive field notes using a constant comparative method allowed the researcher to identify changes in the students' reading comprehension. Evaluative judgements were also made at several levels of intervention and analysis. This was done in order to identify, support, and monitor changes in students' literacy competence (Falk-Ross 2002:281).

only discussed a few interventions, in recent years there have been many such interventions although researchers have used different terms to describe their projects. However, it is important to note that the instructional supports underlying these approaches are similar. What appears wanting in the literature search on reading comprehension instruction is that in many studies the relationship between reading and writing is ignored, resulting in little or no attention being given to improving reading comprehension through engagement in writing activities. Since the teaching of reading strategies through integrated reading and writing activities is a focus area of my study, the link between reading and writing will be discussed in the next section.

3.5 The reading-writing connection

It must be noted that while reading has been discussed at length in Chapter 2 and earlier on in this Chapter, as it is the primary focus of my study, the same attention cannot be given to a literature search on writing. This in no way suggests that writing is unimportant. Writing in this research is used as an important means to improve reading comprehension and I argue that any reading strategy intervention should be carried out together with writing activities. This section provides the reader with a discussion of the different approaches to writing and the drafting-responding process, and points out the connection between reading and writing. However, I will not provide a detailed discussion of these theories as such a study can form the subject for a thesis on its own. Thus I will briefly discuss the aspects of writing that I consider relevant for the purpose of this thesis and cite research relevant to this focus.

3.5.1 Approaches to developing writing

As discussed in Chapter 2, between the 1800s to the 1900s, the traditional approach to developing writing was dominant. The primary objective of teaching and, in particular, reading and writing, was the transmission of a fixed body of cultural and linguistic knowledge. In schools writing instruction consisted of analysing writing into words, sentences, and paragraphs. In addition, the written text in the form of the classics (the 'canon') was considered the model of good writing (Cope and Kalantzis 1993). Thus the teaching of writing involved examining the finished products of these texts in the hope that students would emulate them (Van Zyl 1993). This approach to writing focused on form and correctness (Zamel 1982) with emphasis on the written products which the students produced. The underlying assumption here is that writers generally know what it is they wish to say, but they just need to get the mechanisms and the style correct (Quinn 1999). This approach became known as

the product approach to teaching writing. The writing as a 'product' approach does not consider the practices involved in a student arriving at a final product. Moore (1998:84) says that this is an instrumental view of writing in which writing is viewed as a set of discrete skills, which once learned will transfer to other learning contexts. Students' writing problems were viewed as a result of errors in their grammar and syntax and these errors could be avoided by teaching students the relevant rules. Teaching activities within the traditional approach focus on writing activities for evaluation or testing "which is usually tied to previous learning, not to learning in progress" (Langer and Applebee 1987:144). Badger and White (2000:154) say that "product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language, and writing development as mainly the result of the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by the teacher".

From the early 1900s researchers began to reject traditional pedagogy and there was a shift in writing as a "product" to writing as a "process". In the 1970s and 1980s the concept of writing as a 'process' was popularized in the United States, in particular by Janet Emig (1971). The idea that writing supports learning is the heart of the notion of writing as a 'process'. To this end Emig (1971) makes a point that writing provides physical or visual evidence of the thinking as it is written. Further, writing provides time and space for reflection. There was growing awareness amongst researchers that individuals were unique and distinctive beings (Christie 1993) and the focus on writing was on students finding their own voices with emphasis on meaning rather than correctness of grammar. This meant that the teaching of grammar and other forms of formal language teaching were replaced by 'process writing' with the focus on meaning (Cope and Kalantzis 1993). Within the process approach the writing process has been described differently by various theorists (Badger and White 2000), but it essentially involves going through a number of steps including pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and final drafting. Although the word 'process' bears the denotation that it is purely linear and highly predictable, almost mechanical, Emig (1971) has shown otherwise. In her study in which she analysed students' think-aloud-protocols of their writing processes, Emig (1971) showed the process to be very complex, cyclical, and recursive. She suggests that writers do not always know what it is they want to say, but rather it is through the process of writing that one discovers what it is that one wants to say. According to Zamel (1982:187) "as one writes and rewrites, thereby approximating more closely and more accurately one's intended meaning, the form with which to express this meaning suggests itself..". Unlike the product approach where writing is viewed as a composite of words,

sentences, and paragraphs, in the process approach writing is seen as a whole. Applebee (1986:95) says that instructional activities in the process approach are “designed to help students think through and organise their ideas before writing and to rethink and review their initial drafts”. Activities will include brainstorming, small-group activities, journal activities, educator/student conferences, and the emphasis on multiple drafts.

Within the process approach two paradigms that have had influence are the expressivist paradigm³⁰ and the cognitive paradigm (for example, Hayes and Flower 1980). In the expressivist paradigm the focus is on the individual; with an emphasis on personal creativity and growth. Free writing is encouraged: students are encouraged to write about themselves, to express their feelings and focus on the meaning they want to convey (Van Zyl 1993). The educator’s role is that of a facilitator, providing support and guidance through the stages of the writing process. While a strength of the expressivist paradigm is that it empowers writers, constructivists argue that it ignores the immediate context in which writing takes place as well as the broader social context (Grabe and Kaplan 1996). Furthermore, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) argue that the expressivist approach assumes that the cognitive processes of immature and expert writers are the same. However, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argue that skilled writers use a qualitatively different kind of writing process. They differentiate between the *knowledge-telling* model and the *knowledge-transforming* model of the writing process. The knowledge-telling model tends to be used by less skilled writers and involves the writer simply telling what is retrieved from the text. However, studies in higher education are much more demanding and would, therefore, require the use of the knowledge-transforming model which enables writers to, for example, order information, assess relevance of information, and organise their arguments.

In the cognitive paradigm the emphasis is on what is happening in the mind of the writer during the composing process. Hence, many writing theorists, for example, Emig (1971) began to use think-aloud-protocol analysis to determine the strategies students use when writing. Hayes and Flower (1980) argue that during writing writers have to pay attention to different aspects at the same time, such as linguistic conventions, the content and rhetorical issues. They, therefore, suggest strategies that students could use to improve their writing, for example, analysing writing in

³⁰ In South Africa, the expressivist paradigm to developing writing underlies some of the work done in Writing Centres at some universities (see for example, Katz (1995) and Parkerson (1997)).

terms of the needs of the audience, the goals of the writer, and the tone of writing. Clark and Ivanic (1997:84) criticise the cognitive paradigm because they say that skills (like procedures) “suggest a set of neutral technologies or techniques that are somehow separate and separable from the social context...” Although the process approach empowers writers, constructivists argue that it does not take into account the immediate context (Grabe and Kaplan 1996). Hence, since the early 1980s there has been a shift towards a social theory of language.

The socially oriented views of writing were influenced by a number of sources, for example, sociolinguistics, elementary education research, socially based rhetoric, Hallidayan functional linguistics, and the sociology of science (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:94). In the social-constructivist approach to developing writing the shift is away from the individual as writer (as in the product and process approaches) onto the writer, the reader, the text and, most importantly, the context in which writing takes place. According to Johns (1997:15) “There is no artificial separation between what is in a text, the roles of readers and writers, and the context in which the text is produced or interpreted”. To this end, Nightingale (1988:75) argues that the students’ own cultural background plays a role in their writing. For example, she argues that non-native speakers of English, whose cultural backgrounds are not Anglo-Celtic, may not conform to writing conventions favouring linear structure, emphasising relevance, and avoiding digressions, which are characteristics of preferred Anglo-Celtic discourse structures.

In terms of literacy, the nature of knowledge, reality, language and texts are understood as being socially constructed and not as something “out there”. Therefore, reading and writing are understood as learned social practices. The implication for reading arising from the NLS is to raise awareness of the social nature of literacy and an understanding of reading and writing as a set of socio-cultural practices and not merely a set of skills (*c.f.* Chapter 2). In other words, literacy studies, using methods of ethnographic research explore how, when, and where reading and writing are used, by whom and for what purposes. Halliday’s (1985) functional theory of language, that is, systemic functional linguistics, is important to an understanding of writing from within the socio-constructivist approach. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) tries to explain the relationship between language and its social environment and is based on four main theoretical claims about language. Eggins (1994:2) says these are:

...that language use is functional; that its function is to make meaning; that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged; and that the process of using language is a *semiotic* process, a process of making meanings by choosing...

In application, this means that students need to choose the appropriate linguistic patterns in order to convey the meanings they wish to put across. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:134) argue that language and content are integrated by the writer in order to make meaning, and as certain discourses become embedded within particular contexts, they become conventionalised and become recognised as genres serving particular functional purposes. Hence students need to learn to use the appropriate language to convey content through the genres of their discipline.

Having discussed very briefly the product, process, and social-constructivist approaches to writing, I now move on to discuss the link between reading and writing which will further my argument that reading strategies should be taught together with reading/writing activities.

3.5.2 *The reading/writing link*

Until the 1970s reading and writing were not viewed as being integrated. "At most, they were regarded as separate, perhaps related, language processes" (Langer and Flihan 2000:1). This is partly so because the notions of reading and writing grew from different traditions. Hence, in traditional pedagogy, [referred to as the autonomous skills based model (*c.f.* Chapter 2)], reading and writing have been taught as separate subjects within the school curriculum, reflecting the belief that they have little in common (Tierney and Pearson 1983; Cooper 1986; Kucer and Harste 1991; Wells 1993). For example, the bottom-up approach to reading was dominant and reading was seen as an act of decoding. The reader comprehends the text by interacting with the print, that is, converting it into oral language, 'listening' to the language, and obtaining meaning. Writing, on the other hand, is seen as an act of encoding. Writers think about what they want to say and then 'say it' by writing it down, thereby communicating existing ideas. Since writers are the creators of meaning, they are seen as being more active than readers. Writing in this view involves more thinking than reading. This traditional view of reading and writing lead to the divide of reading and writing in the school curriculum (Kucer and Harste 1991:125).

For over a decade the relationship between reading and writing has been re-examined by researchers. Many researchers (Tierney and Pearson 1983; Kucer and Harste 1991; Langer and Flihan 2000) are in agreement that reading and writing are complementary processes and should be integrated into the literacy curriculum. While reading and writing are not identical processes, they do have a number of significant similarities. For example, both are language processes that depend on students' oral language and background experiences from which meaning can be generated and structured (Cooper 1986:311). Both are meaning-making activities. Thus, in both there are active processes involved. Since both reading and writing involve the development of meaning, both are viewed as composing activities since both involve planning, generating, and revising meaning. According to Langer and Flihan (2000), this process occurs repeatedly throughout the meaning-building process as a person's text world increases or vision broadens. Pearson and Tierney (1984) used their composing model to describe how the construction of meaning occurs through reading-writing linkages. In their model, reading is an event in which thoughtful readers act as composers. Just as writers compose to convey meaning, readers construct meaning by engaging in dialogue with themselves about the text and its purpose. Writing involves more than just putting down what is known on paper. By writing, writers can discover new ideas or relationships by synthesizing or integrating their existing background knowledge in new and creative ways. Kucer and Harste (1991:126) state that revision, rereading, rewriting or rethinking is a natural part of the reading and writing process. They list the similarities of reading and writing as follows:

Figure 3.1: Reading and writing as common processes

Reading and Writing -----	Meaning-searching
	Meaning-generating
	Meaning-integrating
	Active Processes
	Use of background knowledge
	Building and Discovering Meaning
	Goal and Purpose oriented
	Context-dependent
	Revision of Meaning

(Kucer and Harste 1991:126)

In a synthesis of research on the reading/writing relations Stotsky (1983) found that most studies were correlational and examined the influence of writing on the development of reading. According to Stotsky, these studies indicate that better writers tend to be better readers; better writers tend to read more than poorer writers;

and better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers.

Stotsky (1983) also examined studies that were designed to improve writing by providing reading experiences in lieu of grammar studies or additional writing practices. She found that reading experiences were more beneficial than either the study of grammar or writing practice on students' writing performance. She therefore concluded that writing instruction can enhance reading development and reading experience may be as critical a factor in developing writing ability as writing instruction itself.

The growing influence of the socio-cultural perspective has led to new ways of looking at the relationship between reading and writing. Reading and writing are considered as intertwined and inseparable language tools. The focus is on how language is used to construct meaning within particular social and cultural communities (Scribner and Cole 1981; Heath 1983; Dyson 1992). Both reading and writing take place in order to meet a personal or social need and are therefore influenced by the context or environment in which they occur. This point is stressed by the new literacy approach, which considers reading and writing as social practices. In South Africa attempts, in education, to shift towards the socio-cultural approach have taken place. This is reflected in the implementation of outcomes-based education³¹ (OBE) and curriculum 2005³². However, as a result of a lack of resources, inadequate educator training, and the generally low morale of educators these have not been instituted effectively.

Some reading/writing activities that can promote the complementary process are discussed in the next section.

3.5.3 Reading/writing activities

Writing is an important process in reading instruction because the students' thoughts are put into words. In this way as students summarize, analyse or argue with the author, they are able to see their own comprehension develop systematically. Thus by writing students are able to monitor their own mental activity (Strong 1991:157).

³¹ Outcomes-based education is a method of teaching that focuses on what students should know and be able to do at the end of a process of learning.

³² The aim of Curriculum 2005 was to focus on the outcomes of learning. Two kinds of outcomes were identified: critical cross-field outcomes (the Department of Education has identified eight critical

According to Strong (1991:157), writing also enhances reading because it allows one to use the words, sentence patterns, and concepts that are found in the text, thereby ingraining them in one's knowledge base. In this way, writing helps us connect what we already know to what we are trying to learn.

By writing while reading, students could learn to organise their thoughts. To assist students in organising their thoughts, directed and scaffolded writing activities can be given to students before and during reading. Writing also can clarify understanding of subjects so that additional reading becomes easier. Zinsser (1988:16) says "Writing organises and clarifies our thoughts. Writing is how we think our way into a subject and make it our own. Writing enables us to find out what we know – and what we don't know – about whatever we're trying to learn". In addition, Nightingale (1988:74 in Emig 1977) says that "writing leads one to integrate material, allows review and re-evaluation, helps form connections, and is active and dictated by one's patterns of thinking and doing".

Strong (1991:161) suggests the use of a writing journal/learning log as a way of attaining clarity. In their journals/learning logs students can raise personal questions, reflect, summarize or make judgements about their subject matter. The different reading situations will require different assignments for the learning logs. In the learning logs students are encouraged to write expressively and writing is done strictly for learning and should not be graded or corrected by the educator³³. Log entries can also provide material for discussions. Similar to the notion of the learning log, students registered for the Academic Literacy course at DUT keep a portfolio. The portfolio formed an integral part of the Academic Literacy course.

While including writing activities into the reading programme is important, Duke (1991:213) states that including writing activities without providing students with effective feedback (that is needed for them to gain a better understanding of the writing process) would limit the value that writing has for reading. One way in which feedback can be given to students is through the drafting-responding process, which is discussed next. It must be noted that in using the drafting-responding process I agree with Johns (1997:14) who argues that "...texts are primarily socially

outcomes that should be developed in every subject) and specific outcomes (which are context specific and describe the competence which students must demonstrate in particular areas of learning).

³³ Log entries could be done at the following times: a) at the beginning of class or when a new study unit is introduced; b) during class when the educator wants to focus students' attention or raise questions on

constructed and that we should make this argument the centre of our classroom practices”. However, the socio-cultural view of writing can be enriched by other approaches (Johns 1997), in particular, the process approach. Therefore, the drafting-responding process as discussed in this thesis is influenced by both the socio-cultural and process approaches to writing.

3.5.4 The drafting-responding process

Academic writing in higher education is different from the writing most students are expected to do in schools. It is well-known that many students struggle to cope and tend to write in the way they speak. The drafting-responding process, which allows for feedback to be given during the writing process, can help students learn the appropriate academic conventions in their discipline as well as begin the process of being initiated into the culture of the university as a whole.

In the drafting-responding process, students receive constructive and developmental feedback from the respondent/lecturer. Students then use these comments to revise their work. In this way writing becomes a process consisting of a number of ‘to and fro’ steps including pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and final drafting. Research in the field of writing has shown that when writing is viewed as a process rather than as a product, it can be a tool for organising and clarifying thought (Zamel 1982; Applebee 1986; Quinn 1999). Furthermore, feedback given during the draft stages is more effective than feedback given at the end of an assignment (Paxton 1995). Students are more motivated to use feedback given during the process of writing simply because they begin to see this process as a way of improving their assignments and hence improving their marks. On the other hand, feedback given at the end of the final assignment is often ignored or misunderstood (Zamel 1985; Hounsell 1987).

The type of feedback given by the respondent/lecturer is crucial. According to some researchers (Taylor 1988; Boughey and Goodman 1994; Paxton 1994), certain types of feedback are much more successful than others in terms of achieving the purpose of the drafting-responding process. They suggest that the focus should be on the deeper meaning of the writing, that is, expression of ideas and concepts, rather than on surface errors, that is, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Paxton (1995:195) says: “You could eliminate all surface level errors and still leave other vital

a particular issue; and c) at the end of class or the end of a study unit when it is important to consolidate, summarize, and evaluate.

aspects of the literacy problem untouched.” This does not mean that surface errors should be ignored. Once the student is able to express his/her ideas clearly, then only should the lecturer/respondent concentrate on surface errors. It is also important that the respondent not instruct the writer on changes to be made, but rather guide the students to problem areas through the use of questions (Bharuthram and McKenna 2006). According to Paxton (1994), this helps the student feel that he/she is interacting with the respondent. The use of questions also allows the student to disagree with the respondent, thereby retaining a certain degree of independence in the writing. In a study conducted by Straub (1997), he found that students were least receptive to comments that they perceived as critical rather than helpful. He stresses the importance of the respondent’s/lecturer’s tone and attitude when responding to students’ writing. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:394) reinforce this point when they say “comments should not overwhelm the students with a sense of failure.....but should offer positive support”.

3.6 Reflections

This Chapter began by providing various definitions of reading comprehension which is a key component of this thesis. Since the majority of the participants in my research are English L2 students it was important to discuss the factors influencing L2 reading. The factors discussed included cognitive development and cognitive style; reading in the first language and second language proficiency; the degree of difference between the L1 and the L2 and the cultural orientation of the reader. In light of these differences in L2 reading, research findings on L1 reading cannot always be applied to L2 reading emphasising the need for research into L2 reading. Thus it seemed appropriate to discuss reading comprehension instruction with a particular focus on reading strategy interventions. Some studies that would inform the research design and methodology presented in Chapters 4 and 5 were discussed. Noting that reading and writing are two complementary processes, the connection between them was explored in a brief discussion of the product, process, and socio-cultural approaches to writing. In the product approach the focus is on the end product of writing and attention is placed on form and correctness. In the process approach the focus shifted to the actual process of writing which includes pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and final drafting. In contrast to the product and process approaches, this Chapter argues that in the socio-cultural approach reading and writing are seen as learned social practices. The immediate, as well as the broader, social context of the writer is thus taken into account because the hitherto neglected link between reading and writing comes into focus more clearly. In

this regard, the audiolingual approach to teaching and learning perceives reading and writing as two separate activities. Recent research has challenged this traditional perspective. Reading and writing are now seen as complementary processes with a number of important similarities. A discussion of reading and writing activities which can promote the complementary relationship between reading and writing was then presented. In general, such activities help to elucidate the student's thought processes. Thus the drafting-responding process was described in which the influence is both process and socio-culturally oriented. The importance of providing constructive, developmental feedback on students' writing is emphasized together with relevant literature on the drafting-responding process. With this background established, Chapter 4 describes the three reading strategies that are to form the basis for my reading strategy interventions in the action research project. Chapter 4 also provides the design of the reading strategy interventions.

PART II

DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

CHAPTER 4: READING STRATEGIES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter dealt with reading comprehension, which is fundamental to the reading process. Also included in Chapter 3 is a discussion on the factors influencing L2 reading comprehension, a review of some reading comprehension strategy interventions, and the reading/writing connection. Chapter 4 provides a theorized account of instructional approaches to the teaching of the three reading strategies that are selected for the research project described in Chapter 5 as well as the research design used during the intervention process.

As pointed out throughout Chapter 3, there has been growing consensus among researchers (Grabe 1991; Du Plooy 1995; Harris and Graham 1996; Kaplan-Dolgoy 1998) that reading comprehension improves when there is greater conscious awareness of reading strategies. Swanson and De La Paz (1998:210) state that students who have difficulty comprehending text need explicit instruction on how to carry out appropriate strategies so that their reading comprehension improves. They also suggest that students need to be taught a variety of reading comprehension strategies so that they are able to cope with a range of texts for different purposes. Furthermore, students should learn how to use them autonomously so that they develop a wide range of approaches to comprehend texts independent of the specific task or situation (Swanson and De La Paz 1998:210). Thus, when students are faced with comprehending new texts they will be able to reflect upon the spectrum of strategies they know and decide which would be appropriate to use in a given situation.

In this thesis, rather than inundating students with too great a variety of reading strategies, as indicated above, I have selected three reading strategies upon which to focus, namely: identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text, using context clues to guess the meaning of words, and summarization. Students can become thoroughly familiar with these including when and how to use them, as opposed to being superficially exposed to a number of reading strategies. Also, if they learn to apply these reading strategies very well, their skill as readers will increase, thus making it easier for them to learn additional reading strategies or develop reading strategies of their own. These selected strategies are mentioned frequently in the literature (Pittelman and Heimlich 1991; McWhorter 1992; Alvermann and Qian 1994; Kilfoil 1998; Friend 2000) and seem to be among the most prominent and widely used ones

for reading comprehension. Students also need to be made aware that a targeted strategy is only part of a complex strategy system activated by skilful readers. They need to know that strategies do not exist in isolated boxes and that the boundaries between them often are blurred.

At this point, it is important to note that underpinning my views regarding the role of reading and writing as well as my approach to research is an understanding of knowledge and learning as being socially constructed. In the Ideological model and in particular the new literacy approach (*c.f.* Chapter 2), the word skill seems to have a negative connotation and the teaching of discrete skills is rejected. While I agree that reading/writing should not be taught as discrete skills, I argue that the pedagogical process of the reading/writing strategy interventions will determine whether reading/writing are taught as a skill or strategy. One cannot discount the fact that in view of the under-prepared students entering most higher education institutions in South Africa and especially the DUT, (and irrespective of language or class as the book by Chisholm (2004) suggests), the teaching of reading strategies is essential. The teaching of reading strategies will enable students to cope when reading academic texts which, in turn, will bring them closer to acquiring the academic literacy practices of their discipline. For the sake of clarity I move on to discuss the distinction between the term skill and strategy and the use of the term strategy in this thesis is given below.

4.1.1 Strategy instruction, not skill instruction

Olshavsky (1977:656) defines a strategy as “a purposeful means of comprehending the author’s message”. According to Entwistle *et al.* (1979:366) a strategy is a “description of the way a student chooses to tackle a specific learning task in the light of its perceived demands”. Cohen (1998:5) says that although the distinction between a skill and a strategy is a controversial issue, in his view “the element of consciousness is what distinguishes strategies from those processes that are not strategic”. A skill on the other hand, can be described as a “cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with written texts” (Urquhart and Weir 1998:88).

From the review of literature in the field of reading, it can be noted that the term skills and strategies are generally used interchangeably. However, as pointed out above, some authors draw a distinction between them (Duffy and Roehler 1987; Williams and Moran 1989; Hayes 1991; Paris *et al.* 1991) as the term ‘skills’ seems to be

associated with the autonomous model of literacy (*c.f.* Chapter 2). In this study the terms 'skill' and 'strategy' are not used interchangeably, but are treated as two different concepts, as discussed in the paragraph below.

According to Duffy and Roehler (1987:415) a skill is an over-learned procedure, the goal being speed and accuracy. Thus skills are executed automatically, without the reader's conscious attention or choice. In contrast, strategies emphasize conscious plans by the reader. In other words, they are skills that the reader uses intentionally, deliberately, and selectively in order to gain an understanding of the text. A similar distinction was made by Williams and Moran (1989:232) who state that "a skill is an ability which has been automatised and operates largely subconsciously, whereas a strategy is a conscious procedure carried out in order to solve a problem".

The differences between a skill and a strategy are further illustrated by the following classroom examples. First, in order to get students to identify the main idea in a paragraph the educator may give direct instruction by simply telling students that "the main idea is the most important idea" (Baumann 1986) or through repeated practise of reading short paragraphs and choosing the correct main idea (Duffy and Roehler 1987). In this example, identifying the main idea is taught as a skill. Second, in teaching students to identify the main idea in a paragraph, the educator would explain to the student what the main idea is, when to look for the main idea, why it is used and how to use it (Hayes 1991:62). In the second example, identifying the main idea is a strategy that is taught.

Although Johnson (1998:23) provides a similar distinction between a skill and strategy as the one provided above, he argues that this distinction is problematic for the following three reasons:

First, with practice a strategy becomes automatic. Does it then become a skill? Second, the term does not transfer well and thus can not be consistently applied to other areas. Does one learn skills or strategies in music, athletics, science, and art? Finally, thinking of a comprehension skill in the same way as one thinks of a skill in other areas, makes it easier to understand and teach.

In a similar vein, Delpit (1988:296) argues that the skill and process debate is fallacious. She states that educators need to understand that "...there is a need for both approaches, the need to help students to establish their own voices, but to coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society".

Delpit (1988:280) makes a call for educators to teach “...all students the explicit and implicit rules of power as a first step toward a more just society”.

Having discussed how the term strategy is used in this thesis, I now move on to discuss vocabulary knowledge, in particular using context clues to guess the meanings of words, which is a reading strategy that becomes part of the intervention design described later in this chapter.

4.2 Vocabulary knowledge: context and the meaning of words

Most theorists and researchers in education are in agreement that vocabulary knowledge is critical to successful reading. Many studies (Nelson-Herber 1986; Beck *et al.* 1987; Nagy 1988; Kilfoil 1998; Droop and Verhoeven 2003) have shown a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Some researchers even have rated vocabulary knowledge as the most important factor in reading comprehension (Hayes and Tierney 1982; Johnston *et al.* 1983; Beck *et al.* 1987). In order for anyone to understand what they are reading, they must know the meanings of the words they encounter. People with limited vocabulary knowledge, especially those who have not learned techniques and strategies for inferring the meanings of unknown words, will experience difficulty comprehending both oral and written texts (Pittelman and Heimlich 1991:37). Thus instructional programmes in reading comprehension should include vocabulary development, which is a specialized form of background building (Cooper 1986:122). Kilfoil (1998) and Balfour (2002) in their study of writing development similarly included a substantial and explicit focus on vocabulary development. While there is agreement among theorists and researchers that vocabulary knowledge is important, they tend to focus on different aspects/factors relating to vocabulary knowledge. This has resulted in many debates around whether vocabulary teaching should occur directly or incidentally and what direct and incidental teaching should entail. Some of the issues debated and those of particular relevance to this thesis will be discussed below.

Schema theorists (Lindsay and Norman 1977; Rumelhart 1980) place emphasis on the reader’s prior knowledge¹ in vocabulary development. The amount of vocabulary

¹ The concept of prior knowledge, the idea already present in the mind, refers to the sum of an individual’s life experiences and includes all the knowledge of the world that the individual has acquired through life. As a result, it is often referred to as world knowledge. Other commonly used labels for this body of information are background knowledge and experiential background (Hayes 1991:37) or presuppositional pools from Discourse Analysis (Brown and Yule 1983).

knowledge a student has can also be an indication of their prior knowledge (that is, information already known of a particular area or topic). Thus, lack of prior knowledge affects comprehension. Schema theorists argue that all our experiences are stored in the brain in knowledge structures or categories called schemata (*c.f.* Chapter 2). With the constant intake of new information/experiences our schemata are constantly being developed and revised. Each new piece of information or experience builds on the previous one (that is, old information or experience). Readers comprehend better when they are able to link what they are reading to something they already know. Thus, if new concepts are to be learned, they must be related to concepts that already are understood. This implies that comprehension cannot be viewed simply as deriving meaning from the printed page. Comprehension is seen as an active process in which prior knowledge is used to create new knowledge (Adams and Bruce 1980). According to some researchers (Johnston and Pearson 1982; Johnson 1984), knowledge about a topic is a better predictor of reading comprehension than a measurement of reading ability or reading achievement. From the schema theory perspective, the reader's prior knowledge is a key factor in reading comprehension.

The developing of students' strategies for handling unknown words has proven to be a challenge for educators, as some of them have not kept abreast with the developments on vocabulary teaching and learning strategies, while others have simply adopted the methods they were taught. The usual approach of most educators is to have students consult their dictionaries or to ask the educator or others in the class for the unknown word(s). Wallace (1982) says that too much dictionary work can 'kill' all interest in reading and may even interfere with comprehension. This is so because readers become more concerned with individual words and less aware of the context which may be able to provide them with the meaning. Excessive dictionary work could also result in very slow and inefficient reading. According to Aebbersold and Field (1997:140), teaching vocabulary in context, and "not as lists of words separate from the topic or context, is vital to comprehension". They further say that:

Context provides a framework of meaning within which readers comprehend and remember words. That framework and all the associations that readers have of the word within that framework help them learn. This is an important issue in teaching vocabulary and is probably the reason, historically, why the teaching of vocabulary has been associated with the teaching of reading. It is also the reason vocabulary should be presented, practised, and reviewed within a context.

According to Perfetti and Lesgold (1979), if the readers' word recognition is slow and labored, their short-term memory becomes so taxed that they are not able to take full advantage of the context. This suggests that while learning vocabulary in context as opposed to providing students with a list of words to memorize is important, it is still essential to teach students strategies to help them cope with the context. Coady (1993:8) stresses this point when he says "...since foreign language readers typically do not have such vocabulary knowledge (large insight vocabularies), it seems essential that they be taught to take advantage of contextual redundancy and clues in order to comprehend while they are gaining the exposure necessary to achieve sight vocabulary".

In academic settings, students are often confronted with new words and concepts that are outside their personal frames of reference. Therefore, they often experience great difficulty mastering the vocabulary presented in their content area texts. Further, as discussed in Chapter 3, orthographic differences in the students L1 and L2 can create an additional challenge for students, contributing to slow and inefficient word recognition. In a study of the role of children's vocabulary knowledge in learning to read, Droop and Verhoeven (2003:81) found a strong relationship between the size of the children's vocabularies and their reading comprehension scores. They argue that for second language students the relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension appears to be stronger and the smaller second language vocabularies of second language students may, therefore, seriously impede their second language reading. Kilfoil (1998:36) says that vocabulary size contributes significantly to academic success. She emphasises two important aspects of vocabulary, that is, quantity (how many words we know) and quality (how well we understand the concept that underlies the word, and how much we know about the word and its use in different contexts). Beck *et al.* (1987) also point out that the quality and quantity of vocabulary correlate highly with reading comprehension. Kilfoil (1998:39) suggests improving vocabulary through extensive reading and rich exposure to words in different contexts as well as the more direct teaching of vocabulary. She acknowledges that within the South African context, given the socio-economic background that many of our students come from, the "ideal of reading to improve vocabulary or reading skills is difficult to realise"². Hence,

² This point becomes evident in the ethnographic interviews (*c.f.* Chapter 6) where it was found that many of the EAL students come from communities or schools that have no library and insufficient or no text books. Many students lack funds to purchase textbooks, let alone books and magazines for leisure reading.

direct instruction in vocabulary is necessary. However, while direct teaching is essential, it is not sufficient as it promotes only the learning of a few words. Therefore, it may be argued that students need to be taught strategies to become independent students and readers, and one of the strategies that they could be taught is the use of context clues to determine unknown words.

According to Pittelmann and Heimlich (1991:37), vocabulary instruction in content areas is crucial and should be designed to teach both the language and the concepts associated with the topic being studied. Many researchers are in agreement that new and difficult words in a section must be taught before students begin their reading and writing. If students are not familiar with the vocabulary with which they are presented, this will affect their ability to comprehend the facts, concepts, and principles of the subject matter. Pittelmann and Heimlich (1991:43) also state that direct vocabulary instruction is usually required in preparing students to read content material. The traditional methods of direct vocabulary instruction consist of defining words, getting students to memorize these words, and then use them in sentences. While this method still remains the practice in many schools, within the South African context many of our EAL students do not have the opportunity to practice using these words outside the classroom situation. Thus an important aspect of context reinforcement is denied to students given a particular kind of environment. This suggests the need for further reinforcement within the curriculum and across it. Further, many students only use the English language in the classroom and most often because they have to. This method is, therefore, limiting. Pittelmann and Heimlich (1991:38) say:

In order for a student to learn a word well enough to facilitate comprehension of related written material, the student must be able to link the new word to his or her own existing schemata. The instructional approaches used, therefore, must provide students with multiple opportunities to build both conceptual and contextual knowledge of the words and to relate this new knowledge to their own prior knowledge.

As suggested earlier, one way of recognizing word meanings is through the use of context clues which is a strategy that can be taught to students. Context clues “are hints provided by the word and sentences surrounding the unfamiliar word” (Wiener and Bazerman 1988:10). Using context clues is a particularly useful strategy for students, especially for students from the rural areas. Often students from rural areas find themselves without a dictionary or are unable to obtain assistance from

the people around them³. Teaching students to use context clues would allow them to tackle unfamiliar words outside the classroom situation and thus develop their independence as readers.

However, it must also be noted that some researchers (Schatz and Baldwin 1986; Kilfoil 1998) do not consider the use of context clues as always being a good vocabulary learning technique. According to Kilfoil (1998:42), finding the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context is not always efficient as the reader can misread cues and infer the wrong meaning of the word or the cues given may not be helpful at all. Nonetheless, despite the potential difficulties in relying on context clues, many researchers (Konopak *et al.* 1987; Sternberg 1987; Buikema and Graves 1993) argue that instruction in using context clues is effective. Sternberg (1987:89) argues that it is “a highly effective way of enhancing vocabulary development”. A study conducted by Huckin and Jin (1987) found that instruction in explicit techniques for guessing words in context improved reading comprehension and vocabulary learning. Bearing in mind the criticisms against using context clues, it is possible to assert that educators should combine instruction in using context clues with direct instruction in the meaning of specific words, especially scientific terminology.

Cooper (1986:166) states that readers do not depend on the use of context clues alone to determine meaning but rather use context as well as other methods. Thus, in the intervention the students will receive advice to use other methods, for example, consulting a dictionary or asking their peers, should the use of context clues not be entirely sufficient.

From the above it is clear that in the design of the intervention, the primary goal of which is to improve reading comprehension, it will be important to help students acquire vocabulary in their content areas (that is, using subject specific information) by using context clues. Ying (2001:19) says that guessing vocabulary from context is the most frequent way to discover the meaning of new words. Earlier researchers also hold similar views. Kruse (1979), Nation (1979), and Oxford and Crookall (1988), agree that learning words in context rather than in isolation is an effective vocabulary learning strategy. This idea is further emphasized by Mason and Au (1990:185) who claim that using context clues to learn a new word is very important. They argue that words that are taught to students in a meaningful context are likely to be learned

³ This point was confirmed by participants in my study as discussed later in Chapter 6.

more readily than words taught apart from such context. The context makes it easier for students to connect new words to their existing knowledge about the larger context. Also, teaching students to learn the definition of a word, without examples of where and when the word occurs, will not help them to fully understand its meaning since often words may have different meanings in different contexts. Students who memorize definitions of words often struggle to use them in spoken and written languages.

Ying (2001:19) lists a number of context clues that can help a reader infer the meaning of a new word. These are:

- *Morphology*: internal morphological features such as prefixes, suffixes and root words can be examined.
- *Reference words*: by identifying the referents of pronouns students may be provided with a clue to the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
- *Cohesion*: sometimes words in the same or adjacent sentences give an indication of the meaning of the unfamiliar word. This is called collocational cohesion, a term used by Halliday and Hassan (1976:287).
- *Synonyms and Antonyms*: synonyms are words that mean nearly the same thing and antonyms are words that are opposite in meaning. Often when synonyms and antonyms are used the reader can find the meaning of new words in the same sentence. For example: "Avani worriedly said she made a mistake in her work, and Nirvana, in trying to pacify her (Avani) said she had also made an error".
- *Hyponyms*: very often the reader can see that the relationship between an unfamiliar word and a familiar word is that of a general concept accompanied by a specific example, that is, a hyponym. For example: "The shop was full of crockery: serving dishes, plates, platters, gravy bowls, ...". Here crockery is being used as an hyponym consisting of the listed items.
- *Definitions*: at times the meaning of the word is defined right in the text. For Example: "Some people can use their left and right hand to write. They are referred to as ambidextrous".
- *Alternatives*: the writer may give an alternative of an unfamiliar word to make the meaning known. For example: "Bachelors, or single men usually live in bachelor pads".
- *Restatement*: often the writer gives enough information for the meaning to be clear. For example: "Malnutrition, that is, the lack of sufficient nutrients in the body, may lead to stunted growth". The phrase that is signals a clarification of a previously used word.
- *Example*: sometimes the author helps the reader get the meaning of a word by providing examples that illustrate the use of the word. For example: "All the stationery was stolen. There was not a pen, book or ruler left behind". The learner should be able to guess the meaning of stationery from the three examples that are mentioned.
- *Summary*: a summary clue sums up a situation or idea with a word or a phrase. For example: "John participates in long distance running, javelin, short-put and long jump. He is very athletic".

- *Comparison and contrast*: writers can show similarity or difference. For example: "A rectangle, like other parallelograms, has four sides". This sentence indicates similarity and also states that a rectangle is a type of parallelogram.
- *Punctuation*: quotation marks (showing the word has a special meaning), dashes (showing opposition), parenthesis or brackets (enclosing a definition), and italics (showing the word will be defined) can also help infer meaning.

Ying (2001:34) lists several advantages of the context-based approach in addition to increasing students' vocabulary. First, students learn how to use the word in context. "Guessing the meaning of a word from its use in context requires an understanding of semantic properties, register, and collocation" (Ying 2001:34). Thus, readers become aware that context determines the meaning of words. Second, context-based clues serve as a powerful aid to comprehension and will speed up the reading process. Third, the context-based approach allows students to make intelligent, meaningful guesses. This exercise is much more challenging than a direct explanation of the word and students are more actively involved. Finally, it helps readers develop a holistic approach toward reading. In trying to guess the meaning of the word, students direct their attention to language units larger than the sentence while searching for clues.

Although I would teach students the strategies to use in order to guess the meanings of words from the context, I believe it is also necessary to pre-teach vocabulary, especially the scientific words in the discipline that would be referred to often. Apart from the advantages listed above as pointed out by Ying (2001), the awareness of context clues will help students cope while reading at home or when help is not easily available. In addition to being able to use clues in the context to determine the meaning of unknown words, students should be able to extract the main idea or essence of the text that they are reading. While vocabulary knowledge will help students to comprehend texts better, there are some techniques that they can use to help them identify what is relevant or irrelevant in the texts they are reading, thereby improving their ability to produce a good summary. The next section describes the strategy of identifying main ideas in a paragraph/text.

4.3 Identifying the main idea/or central thought in a paragraph/text

Many researchers (Baker and Brown 1984; Hidi and Anderson 1986; William 1988) have noted the importance of identifying the main ideas as essential to successful reading comprehension in terms of drawing inferences from text, studying effectively, and reading critically. It must be noted that the instructional terminology for

determining importance in a text may differ from one researcher to another, and from one instructional programme to another (Williams 1986; Winograd and Bridge 1986). In addition to the term 'main idea', the terms 'gist', 'essence', 'key word', 'thesis', 'topic', and 'determining importance' have been used in instructional programmes. In most cases the term refers to the most important thought in the paragraph. Brown and Yule (1983:72) consider the use of the word 'topic' to represent what the text is about as being too simplistic. By using a paragraph, they demonstrate that their use of the word 'topic' is equivalent to the 'title'. They go on to say that "there is, for any text, a number of different ways of expressing 'the topic'. Each different way of expressing 'the topic' will effectively represent a different judgement of what is being written (or talked) about in a text"^{4, 5, 6}.

In this thesis the term 'main idea' is used mainly to avoid confusion among students since most students come from a schooling environment in which the educators use the term 'main idea'. McWhorter's (1992) definition of the 'main idea' as being the central or most important thought in the paragraph is used. Every other sentence and idea in the paragraph is related to the main idea. The sentence in which the main idea is expressed is called the topic sentence. The proofs, explanations, reasons, support or examples that explain the paragraph's main idea are the details in the paragraph (McWhorter 1992:139).

Identifying the main idea in a paragraph is an important and valuable comprehension strategy. The ability to distinguish the most important thought from a number of words requires the ability to be able to distinguish between essential and non-essential information, between the most important ideas and subordinate details or illustrations. This form of reasoning involves comparison and selection. A difference, as noted in Chapter 3, between good and poor readers is their ability to distinguish between what is and what is not important in a text. Poor readers generally regard

⁴ Similarly, Aulls (1979:97) distinguishes between the topic and main idea as follows: "The topic of a paragraph signals to the reader the subject of the discourse. Topics usually are signified by single words but they can be phrase units". On the other hand, "The main idea of a paragraph signals to the reader the most important statement the writer has presented to explain the topic. This statement characterizes the major idea to which the majority of sentences refer.The main idea presents more information than a word or phrase representing the topic of the discourse..."

⁵ I am aware that there are differences in identifying the main ideas in expository and narrative texts. As discussed by Winograd and Bridge (1986:19), in narrative texts, the most important information tells what happened in the story and why. In expository texts, the most important information may be the author's thesis or argument and the information that supports this argument.

⁶ Van Dijk (1979 in Winograd and Bridge 1986:20) distinguishes between textually important and contextually important information. Contextually important information is considered important by the reader for a number of personal reasons, while textually important information is considered important

all the information in a text as being important while good readers are able to see the “macrostructure of a text” (Alvermann and Phelps 1994:217). In other words, the latter are able to see the importance as well as the relatedness of the different ideas presented in the text. Research has shown that many less skilful readers struggle more with this kind of comprehension than they do in reading and understanding details (Harris and Sipay 1975:476). Thus, Baker and Brown (1984:368) say that it is important for students to be aware of the main ideas of a text when studying it. Other researchers, for example Baumann (1984:94), suggest that educators should teach main idea strategies in order to strengthen comprehension ability. Studies within the South African context by Blacqui re (1989) and Perkins (1991) have shown that Black South African tertiary level students generally experience problems in comprehending texts. More specifically, many experience problems when the main ideas are not found in the first sentence of a paragraph. This point stresses the need to teach main idea comprehension.

It must be noted that while many researchers believe in the importance of teaching main idea comprehension and have shown that their students benefited from main idea teaching, there are some researchers (Resnick 1984; Rothkopf 1988) who question if instruction in main idea comprehension is worthwhile. This dissatisfaction may be as a result of the confusion about how one defines main idea comprehension (Pearson 1981; Cunningham and Moore 1986). Hare *et al.* (1989:73) argue that dissatisfaction could also be as a result of “the failure to teach students to transfer their main idea skills to texts other than those found in their readers”.

In their review of literature on main idea comprehension, Alvermann and Phelps (1994:216) found that in many reading programmes identifying the main idea was taught as a discreet skill. Students generally practised finding the main idea in worksheets that had specially constructed paragraphs or passages. Alvermann and Phelps (1994) argue that the reading materials used in content area instruction are much more complex. Often the main ideas are not explicit and, therefore, finding the main idea can be problematic for the student. Due to the complexities involved in finding main ideas in naturally occurring texts, Hare *et al.* (1989) suggest that instruction should be based on the actual reading materials that students use⁷. By

by the author and a well-written text is usually organized to communicate this importance to the reader. In this thesis the focus is on textually important information.

⁷ The terms contrived texts and naturally occurring texts are used by Hare *et al.* (1989:74). By contrived texts they mean the instructional and practice texts found in main idea skill lessons in basal readers, whereas naturally occurring texts refer to those found in science and social studies textbooks. Hare *et*

means of a paragraph that has no explicitly stated 'main idea', Alvermann and Phelps (1994:217) demonstrate how determining the importance of the subordinate ideas in the same paragraph is largely subjective. Taking these criticisms into account, any instructional programme on main idea should use discipline specific materials to demonstrate the finding of the main idea(s).

Sometimes, when the main idea is not stated explicitly, the reader must then construct a statement to represent the main idea. Studies (Pearson and Johnson 1978: Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983) have indicated that construction of the main idea is crucial for the comprehension of a text. Afflerbach (1990:44) states that constructing the main idea is a complex process "which involves skilful coordination of related strategies, and expertise in using these strategies develop through extensive and varied reading experiences". In his study, Afflerbach (1990) also found that if the reader does not have sufficient prior knowledge of the text topic, then the difficulty of constructing the main idea is compounded. Considering the fact that many students at DUT have not been engaged in extensive reading or do not have varied reading experiences, they are bound to experience difficulties in main idea identification and construction. This then would invariably affect their reading comprehension and hence their ability to produce 'good assignments'.

The type of instructional methods used to teach the 'main idea' is important. An instructional procedure suggested by McWhorter (1992:148-149) involves alerting students to the several positions in a text where the main idea can be located. McWhorter says that the most common place where the main idea can be placed is in the first sentence. This is followed by an elaboration of the main idea. In this type of paragraph the author usually employs a deductive thought pattern whereby a statement is made at the beginning of a paragraph, and is then supported by the rest of the paragraph. Alternately, the main idea could be found in the last sentence of the last paragraph. In this case, in the initial paragraphs, the author leads or builds up to the main idea (that is, provides supporting evidence) and then states it in a sentence at the end. This is suggestive of an inductive thought patterning. The main idea also can be found in the middle of the paragraph. In this case the author builds up to the main idea, then states it in the middle of the paragraph, and continues with further elaboration and detail. Sometimes the main idea is stated twice. The author

al. (1989) also found that students had difficulty in transferring their main idea skills when taught main idea using contrived texts. They hypothesize that due to the complex structure and novel content of naturally occurring texts, it is more difficult for students to identify the main idea in these texts. Therefore, instruction in main idea should include naturally occurring texts.

may choose to state the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph, then provide explanations or supporting details and, finally, end by restating the main idea.

While most paragraphs contain a topic sentence that directly states the main idea, sometimes the main idea may not be stated at all and the reader is expected to infer or reason out what the main idea of the paragraph is. Such paragraphs usually contain only details or specific information relating to a given topic. When faced with such a paragraph, McWhorter (1992:160) suggests asking the following questions: What is the one thing (topic) the author is discussing throughout the paragraph, and What is the author saying about this thing (that is, the main idea)?

Cooper (1986:239) outlines the following four steps as being effective in teaching students to identify the main idea:

- *Step 1:* Read the text to determine the general topic. To accomplish this, note which of the ideas are related to one another. Together, these ideas form the general topic.
- *Step 2:* Look for a sentence that seems to summarize the related details of the text. This sentence may be found anywhere in the text and it is most likely to be the main idea.
- *Step 3:* If there is no such sentence, then look to see what ideas are irrelevant to all the others.
- *Step 4:* Make use of the related, relevant details to formulate the main idea in your own words.

In addition to the type of instruction given, the materials used during instruction also are very important. The importance of using naturally occurring texts rather than contrived texts during teaching and practice sessions was discussed earlier. Using discipline specific material will make the lessons more meaningful for students and is a point that will be taken into account during the implementation of my interventions. Once students have acquired the expertise in using context clues to determine the meaning of the unknown words as well as in identifying the main idea/thought(s) in the text they are reading, they would be in a better position to summarize information. Summarization is an important strategy that is essential in higher education as students are often expected to consult a variety of texts in order to complete assignments, supplement their lecture notes or when studying for an examination. Summarization is the third reading strategy that will be featured in the pedagogy of the intervention and is therefore discussed in the next section.

4.4 Constructing a summary

The ability to summarize information is essential in higher education. At this level students are often expected to consult a variety of sources in order to complete an assignment or to supplement lecture notes. Yet many students lack efficient summary strategies and tend to choose some sentences to copy or paraphrase while leaving out certain sentences, often the one's they do not understand. Thus summarizing for such a student becomes more of a process of selection rather than the synthesis of information. This is a common problem that lecturers at DUT experience with their students' writing. Kirkland and Saunders (1991:195) describe summarizing as a highly complex, recursive reading and writing activity. Thus, it is an exercise that is very difficult for students to learn on their own, but it can be taught directly.

McWhorter (1992:251) defines a summary as "a brief statement or list of ideas that identifies the major concepts in a textbook selection. Its main purpose is to record the most important ideas in an abbreviated and condensed form". Alvermann and Qian (1994:23) say that often when students are not able to summarize what they have read, it is because they are not able to identify what is important⁸. Other researchers (Garner 1982; Hare and Borchardt 1984; Winograd 1984; Hidi and Anderson 1986) also have argued that being able to identify the main idea/topic sentence is important when making a summary. The main idea is required in the selection process, that is, in determining what is to be deleted and what is to be included. This would suggest that any instructional programme on summarization should also include teaching students how to identify the main idea in a paragraph/text. It must be noted that although Alvermann and Qian (1994) say that determining the importance or relevance of information in a text is necessary, they state that it is not sufficient for learning how to summarize a text. Readers need to be able to synthesize the important and relevant information they obtained and to rewrite this in a logical, coherent manner. Most important is that their rewritten piece, when read, should convey the same meaning as the original.

Many researchers have acknowledged the role of summary making in the learning process. According to Hidi and Anderson (1986:473), the process of summarization aids in the learning process, as it helps readers clarify the meanings of texts. By

⁸ For example, Winograd (1984) found that while Grade 8 students who were good readers were able to identify important information on the basis of its textual relevancy, the Grade 8 students who experienced difficulty reading were not able to do this. Instead, they identified information on the basis of personal interest.

summarizing texts/passages students can assess their level of comprehension and retention of a text as well as their preparedness for examinations (Kaplan-Dolgoy, 1998:67). If students are not able to produce summaries of what they read, then this is an indication to them that they need to reread the text to obtain a better understanding. Alvermann and Phelps (1994:221) say that summarizing entrenches the many processes involved in learning from text, including the determining of important information, understanding text structure, and drawing inferences.

Summarization requires students to consider carefully the text, including rereading and checking for information. Hidi and Anderson (1986) describe summary writing as a very special writing activity as the quality of the final summary depends not only on the students' writing ability, but also on the extent to which the material to be summarized is comprehended. In addition to summary writing being a complex and difficult task, Kirkland and Saunders (1991) say that external⁹ and internal¹⁰ constraints can affect the student's performance in writing summaries. In terms of external constraints, from my experience of working with lecturers at DUT, I often found that students were given assignments without clear guidelines on the expectations of the lecturer. Many students often are unfamiliar with the 'norms and conventions' of their discipline and, therefore, are not able to anticipate their lecturer's expectations, expectations which are often 'common sense' knowledge to the lecturer (*c.f.* Chapter 2). This fact, coupled with the students' inadequate summarizing strategies, invariably leads to 'poor' assignments. Therefore, students need to be provided with clear guidelines on the expectations of the lecturer and this can be done by use of a rubric¹¹. In teaching summarization, as far as possible, educators must try to limit these external constraints.

With regard to internal constraints, Kirkland and Saunders (1991:111) state that students with weaker L2 proficiencies tend to process texts using the bottom-up approach to reading comprehension (*c.f.* Chapter 3). Students who rely on the bottom-up approach, fail to acquire the 'big picture' in planning and writing their summaries. This often results in plagiarism and/or lack of cohesion in their

⁹ External constraints: purpose and audience of the assignment; discourse community conventions; nature of material to be summarized; and time constraints.

¹⁰ Internal constraints: L2 proficiency; content/formal schemata; cognitive and metacognitive skills, and affect.

¹¹ Andrade (online: accessed 2003) defines a rubric as "a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work, or 'what counts' (for example, purpose, organisation details, voice, and mechanisms are often what counts in a piece of writing); it also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor".

assignments. This suggests that weaknesses in their internal constraints may manifest itself in bottom-up processing. It must be noted that Hidi and Anderson (1986:474) did not attribute poor summary writing to either external or internal constraints, but say that “inadequate summarization is more likely to result from writers making inappropriate choices as to what is important in the original texts, and from their inability to coordinate and integrate difficult parts of the discourse”.

In view of the fact that summarizing is not an easy process, Alvermann and Phelps (1994:222) argue that students need to be shown how to summarize. In addition, students need continual, long-term practice so that summarizing becomes one of the reading strategies that students will use readily. Friend (2000:320) lists four defining features for content area reading summaries, namely, it is short, it tells what is most important to the author, it is written in your own words, and it states the information you were expected to research/study on. Many researchers have attempted to teach summarizing to students using different methods but most of the studies focus on school children and not students in higher education. Thus, there is a need for greater research on summarization using adult students. Within the South African context, one such study, that is, involving students in higher education, was conducted by Balfour (2000:27). He found that the students’ ability to summarize information succinctly and coherently is good. The mean for proficiency at summarizing information was relatively high at 73% as compared to the relatively low mean for grammatical correctness (47%). Balfour concludes that “students are, on average, sufficiently proficient at the task of reading and writing when summarizing information, as compared to other areas of English language proficiency”. It must be noted that vast differences were found in the results of L1, L2, and foreign language speakers. Results showed that as many as 68% of L1 English speakers and 63% of foreign language speakers perform in a percentage range between 80-100% compared to the fewer L2 speakers of only 37%. Since the students performed better in summarization test than in the comprehension test, Balfour (2000:30) suggests the possibility that students may be able to summarize information relatively efficiently without necessarily understanding the content of the texts they are summarizing.

In a review of the literature on summarizing, Hidi and Anderson (1986) found that while different terms have been used to identify the different operational procedures used in making a summary, there are three operations that appear repeatedly across the different studies. These include the selection and deletion of some information;

the condensing of material and the substitution of higher order superordinate concepts, and the integration of material to form a coherent and accurate representation of the original material (Dole *et al.* 1991:245).

The type of strategy instruction that students receive on summarizing information is important. The most common seems to be the six summarization rules as presented by Brown and Day (1983:2). These are the deletion of unnecessary material (that is, trivia); deletion of redundancy; substitution of a subordinate term for a list of items; use of a superordinate term for a list of actions; selection of a topic sentence provided in a text; and invention of a topic sentence if none appears explicitly in the text. These six rules will be adapted for use during my reading strategy interventions.

A study conducted by Brown and Day (1983), used the six rules to examine age differences when paraphrasing expository texts. The subjects¹² were given two expository texts that they had to read three times and write a summary on. The results showed that the college students were adept at using the deletion rule, employing superordination and identifying topic sentences. The application of the invention rule proved problematic and was used far less frequently than was appropriate¹³.

Brown and Day's (1983) six rules were also used by Hare and Borchardt's (1984)¹⁴. In addition to the six rules they also included two other rules: a paragraph-combining rule (summarizing) and a 'polishing' (that is revising) rule. The results showed that there were no significant differences in the summarization process and products between the two groups of students in their summarization techniques (Hare and Borchardt 1984:62). However, the two groups were significantly different from a control group in terms of summarization efficiency and summarization rule usage. Hare and Borchardt's studies do seem to support the conclusion that text summarization can be taught (Garner 1987:113). The success of the various studies in helping to improve students' summarization strategies strengthens the call for reading strategy interventions. In the concluding section of the Chapter I argue that

¹²The subjects in Brown and Day's (1983:10) study were twenty freshmen undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology class at the University of Illinois.

¹³ Brown and Day (1983:12) say that the invention rule is difficult because it departs radically from the copy-delete rule. The invention rule requires students to add information rather than just delete, select or manipulate sentences that are already provided in the text.

¹⁴ The subjects in Hare and Borchardt's (1984) study consisted of eighty-four high school juniors from minority, low-income homes. The subjects were randomly assigned to two groups: one group received deductive instruction while the other group received inductive instruction. Instruction was over three consecutive days for two hours per day.

since (as discussed above) reading comprehension is vital to reading process, there is a need to teach reading strategies in order to enhance reading comprehension especially within the DUT context. Having presented in this section a theoretical and pedagogical account of the three reading strategies that are to form the research project, in the next section the design of the action research project is presented.

4.5 The design of the action research project

The primary objective of the action research project was to teach students three reading strategies and, in so doing, raise their meta-awareness of reading strategies and to improve their reading comprehension and writing development. It must be noted that since the action research project was conducted during the Academic Literacy lecture period, and the aim of Academic Literacy is to help students acquire a literacy practice in their discipline, discipline-specific materials were used in designing the interventions. Using discipline specific material is in keeping with the view of Idol *et al.* (1991:76) that cognitive instruction should preferably be “conducted within subject matter areas and within the context of tasks that have meaning for learners”. Thus, students were motivated by the fact that the content used was academically relevant to them. From the beginning of the year (2004) I worked very closely with a dental technology lecturer who lectured the Tooth Morphology course to the students on the extended first year programme. Since one of my tasks was to help students develop their writing practices using a Tooth Morphology assignment, it was appropriate to use this assignment for the reading interventions. Hence, all the materials used in the designing of the reading strategy exercises focused on the assignment. The topic of the assignment was on infection control in the dental laboratory (*c.f.* Appendix 5 for assignment topic). The sources of the materials used for the interventions were relevant texts obtained from the library. In this way, a dual purpose would be achieved – first, to help students acquire some reading strategies thereby improving their comprehension, and second, to help them develop their writing by taking them through a writing process to the eventual completion of the assignment (*c.f.* Figure 4.1 for the design of the reading strategy interventions).

Figure 4.1: Designing the reading strategy interventions

Week	Content	Pedagogical Process	Outcomes
One	<p>Definition of reading</p> <p>Understanding of reading strategies</p>	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write responses on their understanding - Compare answers with seated partners - Each pair then discuss response with another pair - Class feedback and discussion <p>Lecturer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elaboration of students' answers and further explicit explanation <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write responses on their understanding - Volunteers read out answers <p>Lecturer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion leading from students' responses and further explicit explanation <p>Students: Reading strategy pre-test</p>	<p>At the end of these lessons students should have a better understanding of reading, reading strategies and the importance of academic reading</p> <p>To assess students' prior understanding and use of reading strategies</p>
Two	<p>Identifying the main idea in a paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the main idea? - Where is the main idea found? 	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write answers to questions - Student feedback and discussion <p>Lecturer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explicit explanation of why, when and how to use strategy - Modelling: through use of example and think aloud protocol <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice: application exercises: individual/pair work followed by discussion of answers - Transfer: homework exercises and discussion of answers <p>Student/Lecturer: reflection</p>	<p>At the end of these lessons students should be adept at identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text</p>
Three	<p>Guessing the meaning of words from the context using context clues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are context clues? - What are some of the things you do when you experience difficulty understand a word? 	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write answers to questions - Work in pairs and compare answers - Read out answers to class <p>Lecturer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion/elaborate on students' responses - Explicit explanation and example of context clues - Modelling: Demonstrate how to use context clues by modelling using think aloud protocol and self-questioning <p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice: work individually on exercises then discuss with seated partners. - Volunteers to read out answers - Transfer: exercises to re-enforce guidelines for using context clues and additional practice using think aloud protocol and self-questioning; working in pairs and discussion of answers <p>Students/Lecturer: reflection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the end of these lessons students should be able to figure out the meaning of a word from the words around it - Students should be familiar with the hints/clues that can suggest the meaning of a particular word in a sentence, paragraph, or passage - Students' awareness of content clues should be raised

Four	Summarizing information - What is a summary? - When and why do we make summaries?	Students: - provide individual written answers to questions - Work in groups and discuss and debate answers and reach consensus - Spokesperson reads out group answers Lecturer: - Facilitate discussion, reinforcing and clarifying points - Provide explanation and guidelines on how to summarize information - Modelling: model the process of summarization Students: - Practice: discuss understanding of paragraph with partner; summarize paragraph individually using modelling process demonstrated by lecturer - Transfer: feedback/discussion Students/Lecturer: reflection	At the end of these lessons students should be able to summarize a text/passage to the required length whilst retaining the focus of the original text
Five	Simultaneous use of all three reading strategies taught (cognitive apprenticeship and whole language approaches)	Students: - Previewing the given article Lecturer: - Explicit explanation of task - Modelling using the cognitive apprenticeship approach: first read text aloud for general understanding; then re-read showing students how to use the three reading strategies taught Students: - Practice: students to practice method demonstrated then volunteer demonstrates process used - Transfer: read chapter given and summarize relevant information required for assignment Students/Lecturer: reflection	At the end of these lessons students should be able to simultaneously use all three reading strategies taught during the reading of a text/passage. They should know when, why, and how to use each strategy
Six	The three target reading strategies using discipline-specific texts	Students: - Reading strategy post-test - TELP post-test	To assess the extent to which students' level of understanding of 'target' reading strategies shifted To determine success of interventions

As indicated in Figure 4.1, for the design of the intervention explicit scaffolded tasks were planned to help students through their understanding of the three reading strategies and to reflect on these as they were taught and experienced. Each lesson cycle conformed to the process of action research, that is, planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In teaching the three selected reading strategies, both the explicit explanation approach (Hansen and Pearson 1983; Pearson 1985; Duffy *et al.* 1986; Rinehart *et al.* 1986) and the cognitive-apprenticeship approach (Palinscar and Brown 1984; Brown *et al.* 1986) were used. Both these approaches grew out of the desire to apply direct teaching to authentic reading tasks (Stahl and Hayes 1997:3). Explicit instruction involves an explanation, modelling, practice, and transfer of the strategy. In contrast to the explicit explanation approach, in cognitive-apprenticeship a more holistic approach is used by teaching multiple strategies simultaneously. The principles of outcomes-based education are similar to the cognitive-apprenticeship

approach. Using social interaction as a mediator during the learning process, cognitive-apprenticeship transfers the responsibility for learning from educator to students. I made the decision to use the explicit explanation approach because research has shown that students need explicit strategy instruction in order to improve their reading comprehension (Duffy *et al.* 1986). However, while a single strategy may be taught initially as a way of enhancing students' awareness and use of the strategy, it is also important that they be able to cope using multiple strategies simultaneously. The cognitive-apprenticeship approach caters for the multiple use of strategies, hence my decision to use it in the latter part of the action research intervention. Figure 4.2 describes the lesson schedule.

Figure 4.2: Lesson schedule

Week	Date	Lesson	Content
Week One	12/05/04	Lesson 1	Writing task / Introductory lesson
	13/05/04	Lesson 2	Pre-test
Week Two	19/05/04	Lesson 3	Identifying the main idea in a paragraph
	20/05/04	Lesson 4	Revision exercises / Writing task
Week Three	26/05/04	Lesson 5	Guessing the meaning of words in context
	27/05/04	Lesson 6	Revision exercises / Writing task
Week Four	02/06/04	Lesson 7	Summarizing
	03/06/04	Lesson 8	Revision exercises / Writing task
Week Five	09/06/04	Lesson 9	Exercise: using all strategies simultaneously
	10/06/04	Lesson 10	Individual / Group work / Discussion
Week Six	15/06/04	Lesson 11	Reading strategy post-test
	22/06/04	Lesson 12	TELP post-test

In Week One, the first lesson will begin by asking students to write down, in a short paragraph, their definition of reading and their understanding of reading strategies. They will then be given an introductory lesson on the importance of reading and the wide range of strategies that they could use to enhance their reading comprehension. The three reading strategies to be used in the intervention, that is, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, guessing the meaning of words in context, and summarizing, will be mentioned. It must be noted that throughout the lesson students will be encouraged to ask questions. In Lesson 2, students will be given a pre-test on all three reading strategies (*c.f.* Appendix 6)

In Week Two, Lesson 3 will be taught using the explicit explanation approach, involving explanation, modelling, practice and transfer. Lesson 3 will begin with an explanation of the strategy identifying the main idea in a paragraph (Appendix 8,

Worksheet 1). The explanation will also include a metacognitive explanation of the importance of identifying the main idea in a paragraph, that is, why, how, when, and where it is to be used, based on research by Baumann (1983) and Kaplan-Dolgoy (1998). I will then model the process of identifying the main idea by using various examples. Thereafter, students will practise the strategy through exercises which they will complete in class. These will be collected, marked and returned to them the next day, that is, in Lesson 4. Lesson 4 will be determined by the students' performance in the exercises given in Lesson 3. Students will also be given revision exercises to assist them to transfer what they have learnt in Lesson 3. They will then be asked to write a reflection piece on Lessons 3 and 4¹⁵.

Weeks Three and Four (Lessons 5, 6, 7 and 8) will follow a similar pattern as described above for Week Two. However, in each of these weeks a different reading strategy will be introduced to students. In Week five, during Lesson 9, students will be given a long reading passage in which they are required to identify and use the different reading strategies that were taught in the previous lessons. In Lesson 10 students will be asked to get into groups of four and compare and discuss the various strategies used. In Week Six (Lesson 11) students will write a reading strategy post-test (*c.f.* Appendix 7). The action research project will conclude with Lesson 12 with a brief discussion of, and reflection on, the above lessons and the TELP post-test.

In this section brief explanations and descriptions of the areas of content covered, the theoretical principles, pedagogical approaches, and outcomes of the lessons were presented. In addition, the lesson schedule to be used during the implementation of the reading strategy interventions is given, with the purpose of guiding the reader through the action research process. The interventions involved the teaching of three reading strategies, the primary aim of which is to improve reading comprehension. A detailed description and analysis of each lesson is provided in Chapter 8 as the action research project forms an important component of this thesis. I now conclude Chapter 4 by presenting an overall reflection of the target reading strategies and the action research design.

¹⁵ As indicated in Section 5.3.2, an important aspect of action research is that it encourages reflection of practice. Feedback from students on the lessons would also assist the educator/researcher in reflecting on his/her practice in order to improve teaching and learning.

4.6 Reflections

In this Chapter I have pointed out how previous researchers have highlighted the importance of reading strategies in comprehending a text. There is consensus in the literature that reading comprehension, which is fundamental to the reading process, improves with greater conscious awareness of reading strategies thus stressing the need for reading strategy interventions. Noting that the NLS argues against the teaching of discrete skills, I have drawn attention to the difference between a skill and a strategy as applicable to the research described in this thesis. The terms 'skills' and 'strategies' are not used interchangeably in my study, but are treated as two different concepts. Strategies are not executed automatically, but are conscious plans by the reader to gain an understanding of the text.

In undertaking to design and implement a reading intervention, I have selected three reading strategies for implementation in the classroom. These are using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, and summarization. Each of the strategies has been discussed in detail, supported by a body of relevant research. It is point out that both vocabulary knowledge, and the ability to identify the main idea in a paragraph/text are important requirements when creating a summary. Part of this Chapter discussed the first of the three reading strategies taught in the project, that is, using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words in a text. Some researchers claim that vocabulary knowledge is the most important factor in reading comprehension and, therefore, it should be included in instructional programmes. The traditional method of teaching vocabulary involves searching for the meaning of the word in a dictionary and/or memorizing the meanings of words. I pointed out that these methods could be limiting and thus I advocate using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words. Many researchers have shown that using context clues is a highly effective way of enhancing vocabulary development. It helps readers to develop a more holistic approach towards reading. I then went on to discuss the next reading strategy, that is, identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text which is also noted as being essential for successful reading comprehension in terms of making inferences from the text, studying effectively, and reading critically. Identifying the main idea is also an important strategy that is required for summarizing texts, but it has been noted that merely determining the importance or relevancy of information is not sufficient. In addition to this, students should be taught how to summarize a text, especially since it is an essential strategy required for academic success in higher education. Research has shown that summarization is not an easy process, but it

can be taught to students. Thus it seems appropriate that Brown and Day's (1983) six summarization rules be adapted for use during the reading strategy intervention discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

In Section 4.5 of this chapter I provided a diagrammatical representation of the design of the action research intervention. A brief description of the reading strategy interventions was also given with a focus on the theoretical principles, pedagogical approaches, and the content used during the research process. The lesson schedule, which spans six weeks and comprises twelve lessons, was included. Details of the methodological aspects of the intervention, and data collection and analysis, are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, the importance of teaching reading strategies as a way of improving reading comprehension was discussed as a fundamental aspect of the reading process. The three reading strategies that were selected for teaching in the classroom were then described and elucidated. These were identifying the main idea in a paragraph/text, vocabulary knowledge, and summarization. A brief theoretical and pedagogical overview of each of these three strategies was then provided as they constitute the action research component of the investigations. How these strategies were to be included in a reading intervention, was described in the research design together with a brief description and rationale for the pedagogy.

Chapter 5 begins with a description of the theoretical framework that underpins this study as it informs my understanding of education and literacy in general and more specifically the reading and writing processes. This is followed by a discussion of the different research paradigms, in particular those that I have identified as relevant to my research questions. The research paradigm informs the theoretical and conceptual stance applicable to the study, as well as the methodology and methods to be used in collating and analysing data (Crotty 1998). The rationale for the choice of paradigm is also explained. Thereafter the context within which this research was conducted, the planning and design of the research project, and the piloting of the project, is discussed. A detailed discussion of the research methods, issues of reliability and validity, as well as the data analysis methods used is then provided. Finally, ethical issues relevant to the study are described and their implications for the study explored.

5.2 Research paradigms

The ideological model that arose from a social constructivist perspective of the world and which has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2, constitutes the theoretical framework within which this study is located. To recall briefly, within this framework reading and writing are seen as social processes and therefore are not isolated skills, which are independent of a specific learning content and context.

Researchers (Habermas 1972; Guba 1990; Lather 1991) have used different terms to categorise research paradigms¹. Following Usher (1996) and Lather (1991;1999), I have chosen to categorise these broadly as follows: positivist, interpretivist, critical, and post-structural. Recently, Lincoln and Guba (2000:167) have argued that the current status of research is indicative of a blurring of paradigms and allows “for interweaving of viewpoints, for the incorporation of multiple perspectives, and for borrowing or bricolage, where borrowing seems useful, richness enhancing, or theoretically heuristic”. Moreover, since within one paradigm there could be more than one position, it is not uncommon for researchers to adopt a combination of paradigms. The paradigms used in this study were guided by my ontology (nature of reality) and epistemology (nature of knowledge) as the researcher².

This study fits broadly within the interpretivist paradigm and to some degree within the post-structural paradigm. The purpose of research within the interpretivist paradigm is to understand and interpret a specific context “as it is”, rather than to generalise or replicate the study (Quinn 1999:41). Reality and knowledge are constructed through interactions with the social context. An interpretivist researcher assumes that knowledge and meaning are acquired through interpretation. There is no objective knowledge, which is independent of thinking and reasoning. For the interpretivist researcher, knowledge is generated in the form of interpretive understanding which can then inform and guide practical judgement (Carr and Kemmis 1986:135). In contrast, within the positivist paradigm there is a single reality, which is measurable, and knowledge is gained through discovering laws and making generalisations. On the other hand, within the critical paradigm, an important element of research is to facilitate the transfer of power from one group to another or to replace one ideology with another (Lather 1991). This is not what my study attempted to achieve. My intention is to empower students through interventions which provide opportunities for development, rather than an attempt to alter or replace existing ideological beliefs. Research using the post-structural paradigm “...takes the contextually bound, socially constructed nature of reality as its starting point. Reality is not seen as omnipresent and immutable but rather as transcendental and contextualized” (McKenna 2004:37). In contrast to the critical

¹Paradigms are often characterized by the way their proponents respond to ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions (Guba 1990) and to a series of research issues, for example, the aim of the research and the values of the researcher (Lincoln and Guba 2000).

² In my view reality is a social construction through interaction and not something that is pre-determined. I believe that knowledge is developed through the meanings people give to phenomena within social contexts. Consequently, I find that the study fits broadly within the interpretivist paradigm and to some degree within the post-structural paradigm.

paradigm which aims to emancipate³ individuals, post-structural research attempts to deconstruct the manner in which reality is created through discourses. It is my belief that in order to appreciate a student's individual approach to and ability to read, the study has to be located within the social and cultural context of the individual. In particular, this can be achieved by examining the discourses of reading within the relevant context as well as taking into account the influence of social factors on reading and learning. Hence, one may argue that my work is located within the post-structural paradigm. Having discussed my research position, the research context within which this study is located is discussed next.

5.3 Research context

Both the pilot and the final research project were conducted at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal in 2003 and 2004⁴ respectively. Since 1994 several institutions, including DUT, introduced foundation level programmes or extended first year programmes for students who did not qualify for direct admission into first year programmes of study. In addition, to cater for the many differently prepared students, academic development programmes were instituted to assist students with their language⁵ problems (*c.f.* Chapter 1). A detailed discussion on academic development at DUT has already been presented in the introductory chapter of the thesis.

Over the past two years as part of the academic development programme, the focus at DUT has been on the development of students' literacy practices using discipline specific material. In this regard, emphasis has been placed on interventions involving various writing tasks. Little or no attention has been given to direct interventions to enhance reading together with reading/writing activities. Consequently, the inadequacy of the academic development programme has been highlighted by lecturers at the DUT who complain that either their students do not

³ The concepts "empowerment" and "emancipation" are concepts arising out of Freire's (1972) book *"Pedagogy of the Oppressed"*. In his book Freire (1972) spoke against the psychologistic-technicist reductions of literacy. He argued that it was not possible for literacy to operate outside of social practice and insisted that "Word" and "World" are dialectically linked.

⁴ Prior to 1994, South Africa has a differentiated education system with some race groups being more advantaged than others. With democracy in 1994, steps were taken in higher education, including tertiary institutions, to address the inequities of the past. As a result, the access programme for first entry students was significantly modified.

Please note: A programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences leading to one or more qualifications, usually comprised of a set of credit-rated, level-pegged modules or unit standards; in an outcomes-based system a programme is designed to enable learners to achieve pre-specified exit level outcomes (Council on Higher Education, December 2001).

⁵ The difficulties students experienced with reading and writing was attributed to their lack of proficiency in the English language.

read or when they do read, they have difficulty in understanding relevant material. This becomes evident in students' assignments. Given that reading and writing are complementary processes that should not be isolated from each other (*c.f.* Chapter 3), it is important that they be given equal consideration in interventions to enhance literacy practices. The above considerations provided me with the idea of teaching reading strategies together with reading/writing activities to students in the classroom to enhance reading comprehension. I decided to do this through action research. However, before embarking on the action research project (and arising from the pilot study), it was first essential to understand the students as individuals, in particular, their reading practices, their approach to learning, their values, beliefs, language and motivating factors. This necessitated an ethnographic approach to access students' worlds and practices which will be discussed in relation to the action research project.

5.3.1 Ethnography

As indicated earlier this research also included an ethnographic dimension to access students' worlds and practices. One may argue that an alternate approach to this research is through a case study. To explain the subtle differences between a case study and an ethnographic study, I draw from the discussion by Nunan (1992:75). He points out that while the case study may be similar to an ethnographic study "in its philosophy, methods, and concerns for studying phenomena in contexts" it is, however, more limited in scope as it examines just a facet or particular aspect of the culture under investigation. Moreover, while an ethnographic study is always concerned with the cultural aspects (context and interpretation) of the topic under study, this is not necessarily true of case studies. Generally, an ethnographic study employs qualitative research methods. Case studies are not restricted and may also use quantitative data and statistical analysis. Given that my study used a minimum amount of quantitative data, and was not restricted to a particular aspect of the culture under investigation, it follows, therefore, that the development of an ethnographic dimension was more appropriate than a case study approach for the research.

An ethnographic approach is one in which the researcher interacts, overtly or covertly, with peoples' daily lives for a relatively extensive period of time, systematically observing what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and recording processes as they occur naturally (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; McMillan and Schumacher 1993). In these ways the researcher collects whatever

data are available to shed light on the issues of concern. Given the cultural diversity of the students in my classroom, an ethnographic methodology was considered ideal for providing information on the literacy practices of the students.

An ethnographic inquiry into students' background and family history also allowed for an understanding of the cultural and everyday practices of the students, and how these impact on their attitudes to, and their practices, of reading and writing. An ethnographic approach does not require the coding, classifying and categorising of behaviour early in the research, activities which may result in the researcher overlooking significant findings that may evolve during the course of the study. Instead, the ethnographic approach focuses on narrative rich accounts of the behaviours associated with groups.

An ethnographic approach is sometimes subject to criticisms. It is described as lacking rigour (Fetterman 1989:11). However, a well-structured ethnographic approach has clearly enunciated aims, research design, data collection techniques and methods of data analysis, which will ensure rigour. Another concern is that an ethnographic approach is a mere information gathering exercise based on unstructured and unsystematic observations. However, it must be noted that the information gathering exercises in ethnographic studies serve as bases for theory building in the social sciences. An important strength of an ethnographic approach is that it focuses on the study of the culture of a group in the real world, rather than on laboratory settings, or on role-playing scenarios. No attempt is made by the researcher to isolate or manipulate situations since all data is potentially relevant. In addition to using the ethnographic approach, the research also included an action research component which involved the teaching of three reading strategies.

5.3.2 Action research

The term 'action research' was coined by Lewin (1946). He defined action research as a spiral of steps in "which the educator reflects on, returns to, and extends the initial inquiry" (Nunan 1992:17). Each step has four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These steps are central to the action research process. Other researchers, for example, Elliot (1981), Kemmis and McTaggart (1982), and Ebbutt (1983), also used similar kinds of action research steps to describe the research cycle. While these processes differ in description and emphasis, they all describe a spiral of action or series of successive cycles. These involve fact-finding and general ideas about an existing problem, planning for intervention, action,

feedback of information, monitoring and reflection – in a continuous and repeatable process (Evans 1995:20). Action research as it is practised by educators is a part of their own social process. As such, it tends to be informal and practice-based rather than formalistic and highly theoretical (Kemmis 1988:46-47).

Kemmis (1988:42) describes action research as follows:

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of a) their own social or educational practices, b) their understanding of these practices, and c) the situations in which the practices are carried out. It is most rationally empowering when undertaken by participants collaboratively, though it is often undertaken by individuals, and sometimes in co-operation with 'outsiders'.

An important aspect of action research is that it encourages the educator to be reflective of his/her own practice in order to improve teaching and learning. An advantage of action research is that it is both flexible and adaptable to any classroom situation. The action research process allows experimentation, decision-making, and assessments on whether lessons are successful or not. As such, it offered me an opportunity to improve my own practice whilst simultaneously documenting and learning about the practices/backgrounds of the participants and the impact of these on their reading habits. In this sense, it can be described as 'emancipatory' (Sternhouse 1983; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Walker 1990). It is thus empowering to individuals and participants also learn to be self-critical in their reflection on the process in which they are involved.

On the other hand, concerns regarding the use of action research were also recognised. A major concern is that "action research is always biased because it involves the researcher analysing his/her own practice" (Carr and Kemmis 1986:192). It must be noted, however, that interpretations are subjective by nature because they are based on values and interests as the objects of inquiry, rather than merely on observed behaviours (Evans 1995:92). Another concern is that action research is very expensive and time consuming. Time, energy, and financial resources are invested in a few people who may effect very small changes on an individual level without effecting change on a broader level. It is also argued by some researchers, for example, Hopkins (1985:40) and McNiff (1988:34), that action research can be prescriptive because the process has very little flexibility and may restrict independent action. However, in my view there is sufficient scope for individual interpretation and adaptation within the action research design. Emphasis

can be placed on different aspects of the action research process depending on the objectives of the practitioners. Therefore, freedom of action is not necessarily inhibited.

Throughout the study, the above concerns on action research were borne in mind and ways to address them were put in place.

5.4 The planning of the research

The research began with a collection of baseline data that were relevant for both the ethnographic and the action research components of the project. Once the data were collected, the later phases of the two components were implemented in parallel as shown in the research design/implementation programme diagram (Figure 5.1). It can be seen from the research design that the action research project was informed by the data obtained during the ethnographic inquiry.

The main focus of the ethnographic component of the project was to develop an understanding of the reading practices of the students with an intention to problematise and explore alternatives to such practices. This was achieved through extensive field work involving a number of interviews, observations, and recording processes as they evolved, as outlined in the research design (*c.f.* Figure 5.1). Since an ethnographic study is an interactive process, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously. Data accumulated through the ethnographic inquiry will be relevant to answering the following key questions that were posed in the introductory chapter:

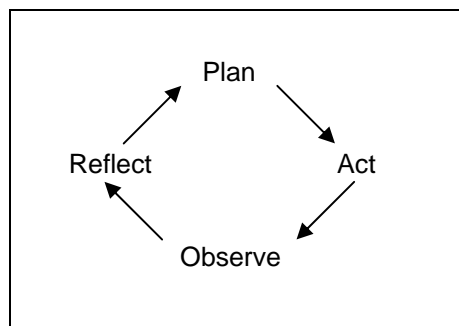
- * What are students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing?
- * What are the reading and writing behaviours that typify the particular families from which students come?
 - Do the students' home literacies interface with the academic literacy norms of higher education?
- * Are students motivated to read?
 - If so, what motivates students to read?

Figure 5.1: Research design

Activity			Time frame
Phase One: Pilot Collection of baseline data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matriculation examination results - Language proficiency test (TELP) results (pre-test/post-test) Designing of reading strategy worksheets Reading strategy pre-test Implementation of reading strategy interventions Reading strategy post-test Reflection/Evaluation of process			August 2003 to October 2003
Phase Two: Gaining access Collection of baseline data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matriculation examination results - Language proficiency test (TELP) results (pre-test/post-test) - Questionnaires for students: to ascertain their attitudes and practices towards reading and writing - Questionnaires for lecturers: to ascertain their attitudes and practices towards reading and writing in their disciplines 			February 2004 to April 2004
Phase Three: Ethnographic inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire to ascertain students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing - Interviews with students to ascertain their attitudes and practices towards reading and writing; ongoing analysis - Interviews with students for history of family background and reading and writing practices; ongoing analysis - Interviews with students after action research project; ongoing analysis - Final interviews to fill in gaps that had arisen from previous sessions, from classroom observations and from their reflective pieces - Observations/classroom notes 	Time Frame February 2004 to October 2004	Phase Four: Action research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-test - Implementation of interventions - Worksheets - Observations - Writing tasks (open response reflective pieces) - Portfolios - Post-test 	May 2004 to June 2004
Phase Five: Collation of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of the project 			November 2004 to November 2005
Phase Six: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report writing - Reflection 			January 2006 to December 2006

There are four steps that are central to the action research process, namely, planning, acting, observing and reflecting (*c.f.* Section 5.3.2). On this basis, the project took the form of an ongoing cycle as illustrated in Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2: The action research cycle



Since the project was implemented using as participants students who were registered for the academic literacy course that I lectured in 2004, this allowed for the flexibility in planning interventions without disrupting the normal workflow with students. The students attended academic literacy lessons on a weekly basis for two lessons per week. Each lesson consisted of two forty-minute periods, that is, a duration of eighty minutes per lesson. The actual interventions were planned over ten lessons. However, before beginning with the project an introductory lesson on the importance of reading and the different reading strategies that readers can use to enhance their comprehension was held. Students were informed that they would be taught three reading strategies beginning with a reading strategy pre-test and ending with a post-test after all three strategies were taught. Hence, the entire action research project took place over twelve lessons and over a period of six weeks (*c.f.* Figure 4.2). The findings of this component of the study will assist in answering the following key questions outlined in Chapter 1. These are:

- * Are students motivated to read?
 - If so, what motivates students to read?
- * Does the teaching of reading strategies enhance reading comprehension?

5.5 Piloting the reading strategy intervention project

In Section 5.4 (Figure 5.1), a diagrammatic representation of the project was provided where the six phases of the research design were highlighted. In this section, only Phase 1, that is, the piloting phase, is briefly discussed. The importance of conducting a pilot study has been emphasised by many researchers,

for example, Janesick (1998) who recommends the use of a pilot study because it allows the researcher to focus on particular areas that may not be clear in the original design of the project.

5.5.1 Planning and implementation

Prior to implementing the action research project I conducted a pilot study on the teaching of the three reading strategies which formed the basis for the design of the final project. The pilot study was conducted over three weeks in September 2003. The participants were registered on the extended first year Somatology programme and their diploma included a course in academic literacy (AL) which I lectured. The class consisted of twenty students, all African females aged between eighteen and twenty years. Since I had been teaching at DUT from 1997, and was the participants' lecturer in academic literacy, it was not difficult to gain access to the institution or the students. Students attended AL lectures for two double forty minute periods per week. At the time of the pilot project I had developed a good relationship with students and they were very eager to participate in the intervention.

Before initiating the pilot project, an initial survey questionnaire for students and lecturers was designed to ascertain their attitudes and practices towards reading and writing (*c.f.* Appendix 2 and 3)⁶. Five lecturers from the Faculty of Health Science were given the lecturer questionnaires to fill in while the twenty Somatology students filled in the student questionnaire. In designing the reading strategy pre-and post-test, and the worksheets for the reading strategy interventions, discipline specific material was used relating to content in human biology (a subject that students were required to study as part of their diploma). Three reading strategies were targeted, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words in a text/paragraph, and summarization. The teaching process included explicit explanation of the target strategy, modelling the use of the strategy, practice exercises, and revision exercises (*c.f.* Section 4.5). After the teaching of each reading strategy students were required to write a reflective piece on the lesson as reflected in the lesson schedule (*c.f.* Figure 5.3).

⁶ Please note that both the student and lecturer questionnaires are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Figure 5.3: Lesson schedule for pilot study

Week	Lesson	Content
Week One	Lesson 1	Questionnaire
	Lesson 2	Reading strategy pre-test
Week Two	Lesson 3	Identifying the main idea in a paragraph Reflection
	Lesson 4	Guessing the meaning of words in context Reflection
Week Three	Lesson 5	Summarization Reflection
	Lesson 6	Reading strategy post-test

5.5.2. Findings and discussion of the pilot project

While there was an improvement in students' overall performance in the reading strategy pre-and post-test, the pilot was not without any shortcomings, and had to be modified for the final implementation. These shortcomings and changes are discussed below.

Although students responded positively to the actual pedagogical stage-by-stage process, they nonetheless felt that the interventions were too rushed and more time and practice were needed for each reading strategy. Furthermore, students were not very confident if they would be able to apply what they had learnt to other reading texts. Hence, in the final project the duration of the intervention was extended by three weeks. In addition to the teaching of the three reading strategies individually, the study was extended to include the simultaneous use of all three strategies in a reading text, the aim of which was to build students confidence in using the target strategies outside of the classroom situation.

The pilot study was also limited by the fact that although students were given a questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 2) at the start of the intervention to ascertain their reading (and writing) attitudes and practices, the data collected was insufficient in the sense that it did not provide any information on students' family backgrounds or school experiences of reading and writing. Therefore, an ethnographic component was included in order to access students' reading and writing worlds and practices. Understanding how students' literacy practices are historically and socially shaped is fundamental to the new literacy studies (*c.f.* Chapter 2) and a feature of ethnographic research in this area (see, for example, Norton-Pierce 1995).

While students were required to write reflective pieces at the end of each lesson, their knowledge of the reading strategy prior to teaching was not established and therefore it was difficult to assess what knowledge students already had regarding the strategy taught. To this end, in the final project, students were given a writing task prior to the teaching of each strategy. Although discipline specific content was used in the designing of the worksheets, the content was too broad and general and, therefore, in the final project the content used was based on a major assignment and thus more focused.

The intention of the pilot study was to serve as a precursor for a full study the following year with a new group of extended first year Somatology students. However, due to the institution's academic restructuring, management decided to phase out the Somatology diploma in 2004, starting with the extended programme. Therefore, in 2004, I used as participants the Dental Technology students who were registered on the extended first year programme and to whom I had access. While the content of the materials used changed, the actual pedagogical process remained the same.

5.6 The final reading strategy intervention project

5.6.1 Participants

Nomenclature in the literature uses different terminology for individuals who participate in the different types of research studies. For example, in an experimental study they are called subjects; in an ethnographic study they are referred to as informants; and in an action research project they are referred to as the sample. Since in this thesis an action research project is extended to include an ethnographic inquiry, and in order to avoid confusion, the common term 'participants' will be used for both aspects of the study.

As indicated in the introduction to the thesis (*c.f.* Chapter 1), this research study was located in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). For the collection of baseline data twenty lecturers and sixty-two students from different departments in the Faculty of Health participated. Twelve of the sixty-two students were students registered on the extended first year Dental Technology programme. These twelve students formed the primary participants and participated in the ethnographic inquiry and the action research project. The remaining fifty students were involved only for the collection of base-line data and were chosen randomly, based on their willingness to participate. Widening the sample to include

lecturers and students from all faculties in the institution would not provide a truly reflective picture of the participants' reading and writing practices considering the diversity and the norms and conventions of the different disciplines. The twelve primary participants were chosen because I had access to them as their Academic Literacy lecturer. They were classified as 'extended first year' students because they did not, in the view of the institution, meet the departmental entrance criteria that would have enabled them to enter directly into the mainstream programme. Thus, they were placed onto an extended first year programme and were given a reduced subject load compared to the mainstream students. Academic Literacy is one of the subjects that is included in their programme. Of the twelve students, seven were males and five females (*c.f.* Figure 5.4). Nine of the students were English Additional language (EAL) students (one of Greek origin and eight indigenous Africans). The remaining three were Indians and English First Language (EFL) speakers. The students were between eighteen and twenty-three years of age and came from different residential areas and diverse backgrounds.

Figure 5.4: Name, race, gender, and age of primary participants

Name	Race	Gender	Age
Edna	Black	Female	20
Andiswa	Black	Female	19
Pumlani	Black	Male	18
Thembie	Black	Female	18
Sibongile	Black	Female	19
Patrick	Black	Male	23
Lunga	Black	Male	18
Vilakazi	Black	Male	19
Melanie	Greek	Female	19
Yasteel	Indian	Female	18
Shikaar	Indian	Male	18
Dhiren	Indian	Male	18

Having described the sample the next section describes the research methods used in the study.

5.7 Research methods

In conducting this research, different methods of data collection were used in order to achieve triangulation. Triangulation, according to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:498), is the cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods, and theoretical schemes. Neuman (1997:336) suggests that triangulation is employed to increase the rigour of the data collection and analysis as

well as to show the richness and diversity of the social setting in which the research takes place. According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:63), triangulation increases the credibility of the research as the “researcher continually looks for discrepant evidence to the hypothesis she or he is developing as a means of producing a rich and credible account”. Since each method has its own advantages and limitations, and the limitations of one method could be balanced by the advantages of another, these complementary methods of data collection were adopted in order to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Since this is an action research project which is extended to include an ethnographic inquiry, the data collection methods for each of these are listed separately. As indicated in the research design, the data were collected in different phases. The first phase was the pilot stage of the study which already has been briefly discussed earlier in this chapter. The second phase was the collection of baseline data for the final project and this included matriculation (Grade 12) examination results, TELP test results, and questionnaire data (lecturers and students). The third phase involved the development of an ethnographic account of the students’ reading and writing behaviour by means of a questionnaire, classroom observations and a series of ethnographic interviews with the participants. The fourth phase was the action research project. This phase consisted of a pre- and post-test, worksheets, evaluative questionnaires and open response writing tasks/reflective pieces. Details of each of the above methods of data collection are presented below.

5.7.1 Phase Two: Baseline data

Grade 12 examination results

The students’ Grade 12 language marks were recorded in order to determine their proficiency in the languages they had studied in school. The main concern, though, was their proficiency in the English language since English is the primary medium of instruction in the South African Education system. While I am aware of studies (Starkey *et al.* 1999, Huysamen 1996 and Skuy *et al.* 1996) that have discounted the use of the Grade 12 examination results, I felt, nevertheless, that the results would provide some indication of the students’ English language proficiency. A study by Starkey *et al.* (1999:9) found that students’ English Grade 12 results had no significant correlation with the students’ end of the year Technikon results, indicating that the Grade 12 results are not a useful measurement for access purposes. Other studies (Huysamen 1996; Skuy *et al.* 1996; Chisholm 2000) also report similar findings. For example, Chisholm (2000:4) says: “The senior certificate does not

provide an appropriate school-leaving certificate for the majority of South Africans, is a weak predictor of success at universities and does not provide an effective selection tool for entry into university.”

Language proficiency test

At the beginning of 2004 some academic departments at the Durban University of Technology were given the option to use a test to determine their first entry students' proficiency in the English language. This test is called the TELP placement test and is part of the Tertiary Educational Linkage Project⁷. This test has been designed by academics from different higher education institutions in South Africa. The test has been administered, assessed and changed annually over the past five years. The main aims of the test are to identify students in need of assistance during their studies and to provide alternate entrance opportunity. The test consists of two types of questions, that is, multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and sentence construction tasks. Examples of questions from the TELP test cannot be provided in this thesis as the test is a standardized test that is still being used by some institutions. However, I shall describe items from the test without compromising its confidentiality since it is important that the reader understand what types of competence the test claims to measure. The test is based on a theme. Students are required to answer questions based on two passages that are directly related to the theme. The MCQs consist of between three to five options from which students choose the correct option. Some questions are literal questions while others are application questions. The sentence construction section involves the writing of a letter. Other items in the test include identifying and correcting mistakes in a passage, re-arranging sentences in their correct order and filling in missing words in a text (*c.f.* Appendix 16 for competencies that the TELP test assesses).

The Department of Dental Technology was one department which requested that all their first entry students write the test. This test formed the pre-test for the collection of base-line data for the participants. Together with the Grade 12 examination results in English, this provided an indication of the level of language proficiency of the participants as compared to the rest of the first entry students in Dental Technology. At the end of the year (2004), participants were required to rewrite the test in the form of a post-test. The pre-and post-test results were compared to determine if there had been any improvement in participants' language abilities.

⁷ TELP is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project.

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were designed for the collection of base-line data – one for students (Appendix 2) and one for lecturers (Appendix 3). Both these questionnaires focused on the individual's attitudes and reading and writing practices. Apart from the primary participants in my research (that is, the twelve Dental Technology students) the other students (fifty in total), as well as the lecturers (twenty in total), were informed that it was not necessary to write their names on the questionnaires. This I believed would provide me with more honest answers. Further, names were not necessary as it was not an intention to correlate the responses of these additional students in any way.

The questionnaires allowed answers to specific questions based on reading and writing practices to be obtained⁸. Apart from this, questionnaires are also less time consuming, as well as economical (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:238). The questionnaire consisted of a mixture of both open-ended and closed questions. While the closed questions catered for specific individual responses the open-ended questions allowed for more general group responses. According to Nunan (1992:143) “while responses to closed questions are easier to collate and analyse, one often obtains more information from open questions”. Some of the closed questions consisted of Likert scaled items⁹. Scaled items allow for fairly accurate assessments of beliefs or opinions (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:244). As discussed earlier in this Chapter, the questionnaires were piloted in 2003 using twenty Somatology students and five lecturers from the Faculty of Health Sciences. A few minor changes were then made. Each of the two sets of questionnaires will be discussed below.

The questionnaire for students: this questionnaire consists of two parts, that is, reading and writing (*c.f.* Appendix 2). Part 1 has three sections. In section A of the questionnaire, the first two questions were taken from the study conducted by Taraban *et al.* (2000:288)¹⁰. They are:

⁸ The questionnaire responses received by my primary participants were triangulated with their interview responses as similar questions were asked in the interviews.

⁹ “The usual format of scaled items is a question or statement followed by a scale of potential responses. The subjects check the place on the scale that best reflects their beliefs or opinions about the statement” (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:244).

¹⁰ Taraban *et al.* (2000) constructed a questionnaire for college students to determine if the use of reading strategies improved everyday college course performance. The methods – open ended questions and Likert type ratings – were used to examine the students knowledge and use of reading comprehension strategies. College Grade Point Average (GPA) and standardized test scores were used to study the effect of comprehension strategy use on academic performance. The results showed a strong and consistent relationship between reading goals, strategy use, and GPA. Students with a

Figure 5.5: First two questions in the student questionnaire (Section A)

1. Describe some specific reasons (goals) a person might have for reading?
2. What are some of the things you can do if you have difficulty understanding something you are reading?

The first question was worded to encourage students to provide an indication of how much they knew about reading for different purposes. According to Taraban *et al.* (2000:289), strategic readers are able to modulate their behaviours depending on their reading goals. They categorise the responses received into three broad categories:

- 1) Educational goals: increase comprehension/understanding in general, learn about a topic, educational purposes; improve vocabulary, improve overall reading level, improve reading speed, and so forth.
- 2) Casual reading: relaxation/pleasure, escape reality and pass time.
- 3) Practical reasons for reading: keep up with current events, get a good job, communicate with others, and so forth.

The second question examined students' memories for instances in which they experienced difficulty in comprehension. The rationale for the wording of this question is that students would be conscious of their strategies during situations where there was a breakdown in comprehension compared to situations in which smooth progress was made in reading. The responses to both questions provided measures of the number and types of reading goals and strategies participants could generate through free recall (Taraban *et al.* 2000:289).

Section B of the questionnaire was designed to obtain an overall idea of the reading practices of students, and in particular, the type of material read. For example, in Question 3, students were asked to list the types of material they read, other than the reading material required for their studies. Through practices, attitudes would be revealed and this would provide an indication of whether students are motivated or not.

Figure 5.6: Example of a question from Section B of the student questionnaire

3a. Other than materials prescribed in your discipline, do you read anything else?		
Please tick the appropriate box:		
	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

higher GPA listed significantly more reading goals and strategies in response to the open-ended questions. In the Likert scale type questionnaire, for almost every strategy, students with a higher GPA had higher mean ratings than those with a lower GPA.

Section C involved the use of a Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) rating scale as used by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002)¹¹. The SORS is intended to measure ESL students' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies, while reading academic material such as textbooks. Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002:2) describe the SORS as an effective tool for helping learners to “develop a better awareness of their reading strategies, for helping teachers assess such awareness, and for assisting learners in becoming constructively responsive readers”. The SORS lists thirty items, each of which uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“I never do this”) to 5 (“I always do this”). Students were required to read each statement and circle the number that applies to them, indicating the frequency with which they use the reading strategy implied in the statement. Thus the higher the number, the more frequent the use of the strategy concerned (Mokhtari and Sheorey 2002:4). The SORS is divided into three subscales:

- 1) Global reading strategies: these are the intentional, carefully planned techniques by which students monitor and manage their reading, such as having a purpose in mind, previewing the text as to its length and organisation, or using typographical aids, tables and figures. These included a total of thirteen items, namely, items 1,3,4,6,8,12,15,17,20,21,23,24 and 27 (c.f. Appendix 2). For example,

Figure 5.7: Example of a global reading strategy

Category	Statement	Never Always				
21: GLOB	I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	2	3	4	5

- 2) Problem solving strategies: these are actions and procedures that readers use while working directly with the text, for example, guessing the meaning of unknown words and rereading the text to improve comprehension. Problem solving strategies consisted of a total of nine items, that is items 7,9,11,14,16,19,25 and 28 (c.f. Appendix 2). For example,

Figure 5.8: Example of a problem solving strategy

Category	Statement	Never Always				
11: PROB	I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5

- 3) Support strategies: these are basic support mechanisms intended to aid the reader in comprehending the text such as using a dictionary, taking notes, and

¹¹ The SORS has been used with ESL students in a high school, college, and universities in the United States of America. It has been field-tested and has demonstrated reliability and validity as a dependable measure of students' metacognition and reading strategies (Mokhtari and Sheorey 2002). I believe that the use of this instrument in South Africa is apposite because of the large intake of EAL students in education and because of the applicability of the thirty items listed.

underlining. Support strategies have a total of nine items, that is 2,5,10,13,18,22,26,29 and 30 (c.f. Appendix 2). For example,

Figure 5.9: Example of a support strategy

Category	Statement	Never Always				
2: SUPP	I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5

Part II of the Questionnaire (c.f. Appendix 2) focused on students' attitudes and practices towards writing. Question 10 of Part II consisted of a set of Likert scale questions, for example, students were given eight statements and each statement had to be rated according to the following categories: "lots of difficulty", "some difficulty", "very little difficulty" or "no difficulty". See Figure 5.10 for an example. These questions were adapted from Weir and Roberts (1994:311) in order to assess students' writing ability.

Figure 5.10: Example of likert scale question

		Please circle the appropriate letter ¹²			
A	Using appropriate vocabulary.	H	M	L	N
B	Expressing what you want to say clearly.	H	M	L	N
C	Arranging and developing your written work.	H	M	L	N

The questionnaire for lecturers

This questionnaire also consisted of two parts – one focusing on reading and the other on writing. Since I needed answers to specific questions for the purposes of this research project, the questionnaire was self-designed. However, for purposes of clarity the questions were formulated in consultation with colleagues (c.f. Appendix 3).

Figure 5.11: Example of questions from Part I of the lecturer questionnaire

2a. Do you ask students to pre-read content material before you lecture to it?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Do you ask students to read content material after you lecture to it?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹² 'H' means 'Lots of difficulty'; 'M' means 'Some difficulty'; 'L' means 'Very little difficulty'; and 'N' means 'No difficulty'.

Figure 5.12: Example of questions from Part II of the lecturer questionnaire

9a. Do you provide students guidelines on how to write assignments?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. If no, please state why? _____		

The collection of baseline data, which provided the basic background information that was required for the study, was then followed by the ethnographic inquiry. As indicated earlier, the ethnographic inquiry and the action research project were implemented in parallel. The ethnographic inquiry is discussed first.

5.7.2 Phase Three: *Ethnography into students' reading/writing attitudes and practices*

As discussed earlier in Section 5.5.1, the participants in the ethnographic inquiry were the twelve students from the Department of Dental Technology at DUT who were registered for Academic Literacy. The instruments included a questionnaire (c.f. Appendix 2) and a series of in-depth ethnographic interviews (c.f. Appendix 4).

Questionnaire for students

For the purposes of triangulation the same questionnaire (for students) that was used for the collection of baseline data, was used in the ethnographic inquiry. This questionnaire was used to ascertain students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing (please see discussion above for more details on the design of the questionnaire). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998:4), triangulation "reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question". The information from the questionnaire, together with the interview responses, would provide an in-depth understanding of the students' reading and writing behaviours. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue that since objective reality can never really be captured, triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but rather an alternative to validation. Unlike the collection of baseline data where the name of a participant was optional, here the twelve participants were required to write their names on the questionnaire. This allowed for the opportunity to match the responses of the students to their responses during the interviews, as well as their performance on the various reading and writing tasks given throughout the study. Students were assured of the confidentiality of their participation. Confidentiality is discussed later in this chapter in the section concerned with ethical considerations.

Interviews for students

A series of what I termed ethnographic interviews were conducted with the participants. The interview is the most important data gathering technique in an ethnographic study. It helps the researcher in classifying and organising a participant's perception of reality. The purpose of the first interview was to determine students' attitudes and reading and writing practices. Similar types of questions as laid out in the questionnaire were asked. These questions served as a non-threatening icebreaker (Fetterman 1989:48) and also enabled me to correlate the outcomes of the questionnaires with the oral responses of the interviews. Furthermore, since these interviews were conducted only after the analysis of the questionnaires, this approach offered the opportunity to probe responses that were not clear in the questionnaires, as well as to address new questions that arose from an analysis of the questionnaires. The second interview focused on students' family backgrounds and family practices towards reading and writing. The third set of interviews was conducted after the action research interventions (*c.f.* Figure 5.1: Phase Three). The purpose of this interview was to gather if there had been any change in participants' reading practices. The final set of interviews were held to fill in any gaps that had arisen in the previous sessions, from classroom observations, and as well as from participants' reflective pieces.

In drawing up the interview guide (*c.f.* Appendix 4), I used some structured, but mostly semi-structured, questions (Nunan 1992:149 and McMillan and Schumacher 1993:251). The structured questions were used mainly to obtain biographical details. The semi-structured questions were used as a prompt for myself and not as the format for the interview. Examples of the type of questions asked are provided in Figure 5.13.

Figure 5.13: Examples of interview questions

1. Do you enjoy reading?
2. What type of books do you read?
3. Did your parents read to you when you were little?

The questions provided a guideline for the issues to be covered and were expanded on, or probed further, depending on the answers that the interviewees had given. This point is stressed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:112) who say that an ethnographer should enter the interview with a list of issues to be covered, rather than questions that are set beforehand. Care was taken to avoid leading questions.

Hence, the interviews followed more of a semi-structured pattern allowing the participants flexibility – a point voiced by some research theorists, for example, Carspecken (1996) and Kvale (1996), as the ideal for qualitative interview. Although each interview had purpose and direction, the participants were encouraged to talk informally about their own experiences relating to reading and writing¹³.

Interview appointments were made with participants and the interviews were conducted in my office. Each session lasted approximately sixty to ninety minutes. With the permission of the interviewees these sessions were recorded¹⁴. Some of the strengths are that the tape-recorder allowed me to collect information more completely and objectively than hand-written notes which rely on speed of writing and recall. Further, the actual language is preserved, it is also more naturalistic and the data can be re-analysed after the interview. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:162) point out that while the tape recorder provides a more detailed record than field notes, non-verbal aspects and features of the physical surroundings are omitted. For this reason, during the course of the interviews I sometimes wrote down points to supplement the tape recording, as well as on information that I needed to remember for later. I felt that writing constantly would be distracting for the interviewees. However, after each interview was complete more detailed notes on the session were made. Thereafter, all the interview tapes were transcribed by a professional. I checked the accuracy of the transcriptions by listening to the tapes while reading the transcriptions.

At the beginning of each interview session a few minutes were taken to frame the interview. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the interview, how the data will be collected and used and the need for using the tape recorder. According to Kvale (1996:126), this approach helps to reduce the power difference between the interviewer and the interviewee. It also helps the interviewer to win the trust of the interviewee. Having discussed the instruments used in the ethnographic inquiry, I now discuss the action research project itself.

¹³ I attempted to create a relaxed atmosphere by allowing the interviewees flexibility, allowing them to answer at their own pace, nodding frequently and by constantly reassuring them with encouraging comments. The participants' right to privacy was also respected.

5.7.3 Phase Four: Action research project

The action research project involved the teaching of three reading strategies to participants in order to enhance their reading comprehension. The instruments used included a reading strategy pre- and post-test, worksheets, writing tasks, and student portfolios. Each of these is discussed below.

Reading strategy pre-tests/post-tests

Reading strategy pre- and post-tests were used before and after the teaching of the three selected reading strategies, that is, identifying the main idea, vocabulary knowledge, and summarizing (*c.f.* Figure 5.1: Phase Four). Even though the Human Science Research Council (HSRC)¹⁵ has developed several standardised comprehension tests, at the time this research was undertaken there were no appropriate standardized tests for assessing L1 and L2 reading that focused specifically on the selected reading strategies. This necessitated the designing of new tests. The pre-and post-tests, as well as all other worksheets used for the interventions, were designed using content relating to a set assignment (*c.f.* Chapter 4 for discussion of interventions). Since these tests were researcher-designed and not standardized, in order to eliminate the problem of the post-test being easier than the pre-test, both tests were given to three colleagues to assess in terms of difficulty. All three were in agreement as to the difficulty of the tests. Once the pre-test was given to students, I then began with the implementation of the interventions. These were taught with the aid of worksheets as discussed below.

Reading strategy worksheets for students

A number of worksheets were designed for students based on each of the three reading strategies (*c.f.* Figure 5.1). Details of the worksheets (*c.f.* Appendix 8 to 10), and how they were used with participants, are presented in Chapter 8. However, as an example, in Figure 5.14 below I provide an extract from the worksheet.

¹⁴ While I am aware of the limitations of using a recorder, in particular, it is time-consuming to transcribe and just the presence of the machine is “offputting” (Nunan 1992:153), I believe that the strengths outweighed the limitations.

¹⁵ The HSRC was contacted in this regard early in 2003.

Figure 5.14: Example of reading strategy worksheet

<p><u>Guessing the meaning of a word(s) from the context</u></p> <p>Working in groups practise using the clues from the context to get the meaning of the underlined words in paragraph 14.</p> <p>Paragraph 14:</p> <p>If symptoms develop after infection, they begin to appear approximately 2.5 to 6 months after exposure. Roughly one third of those infected exhibit the more easily <u>recognizable</u> symptoms of <u>yellowing of the skin</u> (jaundice) and whites of the eyes, light-colored stools, dark urine, joint pain, fever, a rash, and itching. Approximately another one third develop less <u>descript</u> mild symptoms that may include <u>malaise</u> ("not feeling good"), loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain. The other one-third develop no symptoms at all. Thus two-thirds of all those infected develop no symptoms or have mild non-descript symptoms that are often unrecognized as being related to hepatitis. Yet symptomatic and asymptomatic cases can spread the virus to others. This unrecognizable infection with HBV and with other viruses (such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), serves as the basis for universal precautions – applying infection control procedures during care for all patients not just for those who are known to be infected (Miller and Palenik 1998: 59).</p>
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These worksheets were designed using texts relating to a Tooth Morphology assignment on infection control (*c.f.* Appendix 5 for assignment question). The relevant texts were obtained from the library.

Writing tasks: Open response and reflective pieces for students

Writing tasks were given to students throughout the action research intervention process (*c.f.* Figure 5.1, Phase Four). These were mostly in the form of direct questions (Figure 5.15: question 2) or tasks which were used to gauge the participants' understandings of the reading strategy to be taught (Figure 5.15: question 1) or in the form of open response reflective pieces (Figure 5.15: question 3). Participants were encouraged to write as much as they wanted to about the lessons. Open response questions generally allow the writer more flexibility. In addition, participants are not restricted by too many set questions. These responses were used to evaluate the lessons. An example of some of the writing tasks is provided next.

Figure 5.15: Example of writing task

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a paragraph explaining what you do when you come across difficult words whilst you are reading. 2. What is a summary? 3. Write a reflective paragraph about the lessons on identifying the main idea. |
|--|

Student portfolios

The portfolio is a compulsory file that students keep for the Academic Literacy course (*c.f.* Figure 5.1, Phase Four). The portfolio assesses for all the specific outcomes of

Academic Literacy¹⁶. As part of the portfolio, I asked participants to include a section on reading at the back of their files. This was to form their reading journals which were used for both the ethnographic study and the action research project. In the reading journal section, participants were required to keep all their materials relating to the intervention programmes as well as endnotes and reflection pieces after each lesson. In addition, they were required to reflect on the ethnographic interviews by focusing on the interview questions and their responses. Participants also were required to document their engagement in reading practices. These were to be kept in an informal manner as comments, thoughts, memories or questions raised during and after reading. The purpose of this exercise was to have a written record of participants' impressions and to allow them time for reflection and elaboration since the writing down of information compels participants to reflect on the lesson and their practices. Another purpose of the reading journal was to give participants the opportunity to express any feelings or thoughts that might not be directly related to the text itself. Atwell (1987:160) cited in Arzipe (1994:88) reports that her students "....began to reflect on themselves as readers, to become conscious of and articulate how they learned to read, their reading rituals, and their processes as readers, the ways they went about reading and thinking about what they'd read". Thus, writing can contribute to the awareness of the reading process.

Having discussed the research methods, the next section provides a discussion on how the data were analysed. Throughout the planning and implementation phases of both the ethnographic inquiry, and the action research project, issues of reliability and validity were foremost in mind. A brief discussion on these issues is now presented.

5.8 Reliability and validity

I begin this part of the discussion by noting that positivists, for example (Ayer 1936), are of the view that because reality can be stable and unchanging, reliability and validity are highly valued criteria. Positivists believe that individuals will obtain the same score on the same tests given on different occasions and, if the study is reliable, then the same set of results will be obtained if the study is repeated. In this investigation, arising from the belief that knowledge is a social construction through

¹⁶ Specific Outcomes of Academic Literacy: At the end of the course the learner will be able to:

- a. develop and apply a variety of personal management and self-reliance skills;
- b. access, process, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources and situation;
- c. identify and apply language practices and conventions in academic contexts;
- d. produce coherent and cohesive academic texts in a style appropriate to his/her field of study; and

interaction, I do not assume that a stable and unchanging reality is being studied and, therefore, would not expect to find the same results repeatedly as individuals will behave differently and express different opinions as the context changes. Therefore rather than speaking of the validity, generalisability, and reliability of the research findings, interpretive and constructionist researchers talk about credibility, transferability, and dependability, respectively (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Durrheim and Wassenaar 1999). To achieve dependability, the context and conditions under which the research was carried out, are clearly outlined. Throughout the study attempts have been made to provide rich and detailed descriptions of the participants and the context of the research. Therefore, the study could serve as a guide for other researchers to conduct similar studies, thereby contributing to its transferability.

In an ethnographic inquiry the role the researcher takes on is crucial. I began my fieldwork as an insider attempting to see the world from the viewpoint of the participants. However, during the analysis of the data I found it necessary to step back and take the role of an outsider in order to make sense of the situation, interrogating my pedagogy, analysis and findings. According to Fetterman (1989:32), this approach enhances the credibility of, and the usefulness of, the data. In addition, during the interviews the questions were deliberately rephrased to determine consistency of interviewees' responses. Fetterman (1989:92) refers to this method as self-contained triangulation and points out that it is a useful measure of internal consistency.

During the data collection process, all interviews were audio-taped. This allowed for the preservation of primary data. Further, for each of the participants, the data were synthesized into individual profiles. The analysis of the data is presented in detail in the section to follow.

5.9 Data analysis

In the ethnographic component of the project, data analysis began at the very outset. This was an iterative process with the analysis of one stage informing the next stage (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Through the analysis I attempted to discover patterns of thought and behaviour relating to reading and writing. In order to acquire an in-depth understanding of these behaviours, I continuously questioned, listened, compared and contrasted, synthesized, and evaluated information. This allowed me

e. use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

to gather adequate information at the end of the data collection phase. Thereafter, formal analysis took place. This entailed further sifting for patterns and final report writing. The analysis of the data accumulated through questionnaires and interviews are discussed separately below.

Analysis of the questionnaires

The responses for most of the open-ended questions, for both lecturers and students, were analysed as follows. For each question the participants' responses were used to compile an initial list of phrases that described responses (for example, determine the meaning of unknown words) and then the responses were categorised according to this list. A colleague was given the list to sort the responses independently and to modify the list as necessary. An agreement was then reached between us as to the final classification. This method was also used in Taraban *et al.*'s (2000:290) study. It is also in keeping with the views of Dias (1987:20 in Arzipe 1994) who says that "It is the data that must reveal the categories by which the response may be analysed" and Hickman (1981:345 in Arzipe 1994) who states that "Analysis becomes a search for pattern, a striving for workable categories from which new perspectives emerge as the interpretation progresses". A similar style was used for most of the other open-ended questions. Where categories could not be formed for certain open-ended questions, the main comments for each participant were summarized and used accordingly.

The survey of reading strategies (SORS) was scored in the following manner. Once participants completed the SORS scale, a count for each column was obtained for the entire instrument, as well as for each strategy subscale, namely, global, problem solving and support strategies. These scores were then interpreted using the three levels of reading strategy usage suggested by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995). These are: high (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean between 2.5 and 3.4) and low (mean of 2.4 or lower). The analysis of the data from the interviews is discussed next.

Analysis of the interviews

After each set of interviews (*c.f.* Figure 5.1: Phase Three) the responses of the participant were first transcribed. The important aspects of the responses to each question were highlighted and summarized, looking for patterns of thought and behaviour. In order to correlate information, the responses of participants to the first set of interviews were matched with their written responses to the questionnaire. This

comparison informed the next phase of the study. Throughout the process of collecting and analysing the data there were a number of ethical considerations that had to be borne in mind. These are discussed in the next section.

5.10 Ethical considerations

In any research study, be it a case study, ethnographic study or an action research study, ethical considerations are of utmost importance and are stressed continuously by researchers. Fetterman (1989:24) points out that ethics, like analysis and writing, is important in every step of the ethnographer's work. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) maintain that school-based action research raises concerns that can affect the findings of the research. They further point out that the educator-researcher is a moral agent with views, opinions, values, and attitudes. Regardless of the study/research activity, there are some basic underlying ethical considerations that have to be taken into account. These considerations were addressed at the start of this research and borne in mind throughout the project. They include gaining access to the data, obtaining informed consent, confidentiality, issues of trust, the rights of participants, and interpretation of the data.

In gaining access to the data, I assured the Acting Director of the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) that neither the timetable nor the teaching programme would be compromised in any way. It was agreed that the teaching interventions would be carried out during my lecture times with participants since these related directly to developing their academic literacy practices. The ethnographic interviews were to be conducted in my personal time and without any interference to the participants' academic programme. Further, permission was obtained from the Acting Head of Department of Dental Technology to disclose the name of the department in reporting the findings of the investigation.

The aims of both the ethnographic inquiry and action research project were discussed in class with participants and they were given the freedom to ask as many questions as they wished. I also explained that the interviews would be recorded, confidentiality maintained and how the data would be used¹⁷. In order to put participants' minds at ease, these points were reiterated at the start of each interview session. Informed consent (*c.f.* Appendix 1) was obtained from each of the students

¹⁷ A transcriber was used to type up the interviews. I explained to her the need for confidentiality of the participants' identities. Further, in writing up the thesis all names of participants have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

prior to the commencement of data accumulation. Having presented the research methodology, I now conclude this chapter with a number of reflections.

5.11 Conclusion

In this Chapter the research methodology used to gather, organise, and interpret data pertaining to the project has been described and explained. The chapter began with a brief discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning the research as well as my research orientation. An explanation of why this research is located within the ideological model of the socio-constructivist view of the world was given. Underpinning my beliefs regarding the role of reading and writing in learning, as well as my orientation to research, is an understanding of knowledge and learning as socially constructed. All reading and writing are embedded and dependent on not only the immediate social context, but also the broader social and cultural context. I then explained that the research fits broadly within the interpretivist paradigm and to some degree within the post-structural paradigm. Within the interpretivist paradigm reality is constructed by human beings in relation to each other and does not exist 'out there' (Crotty 1998; Lincoln and Guba 2000). Post-structuralists argue that knowledge and power are tied intricately together in the concept of discourse. Discourse here refers to how people speak about a phenomenon or how they frame or understand it.

The discussion of the research paradigm deployed in my thesis is followed by a discussion of the pilot reading strategy project. The pilot project involved the teaching of three reading strategies, namely, using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, and summarization, the aim of which is to improve reading comprehension. The chapter also shows that action research was found to be most appropriate in teaching the interventions as it would allow for the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on the interventions in the classroom, as well as for the repeating of the cycle with appropriate modifications. Arising from the pilot project, the action research project was extended to include an ethnographic inquiry into students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing. Since reading is a social process, the ethnographic inquiry afforded me the opportunity to understand the participants' family background history and practices relating to reading and writing. For both the ethnographic and action research components of this research, the instruments to be used in collecting data and the method of data analysis were discussed. The research was to be conducted in six phases, that is, the pilot phase, the collection of

base-line data, the ethnographic inquiry, the action research project, analysis and interpretation, and writing.

Having described the research methodology and provided a rationale for my methodological choices, what follows in chapters to come is the analysis and interpretation of the data. This discussion is provided in Part III: Reading, writing, and integrated reading strategy interventions and comprises the next three chapters of this thesis, starting with Chapter 6 which focuses on the students' attitudes and practices concerning reading.

PART III

READING, WRITING, AND INTEGRATED READING STRATEGY INTERVENTIONS

CHAPTER 6: STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES TOWARDS READING: FROM CHILDHOOD AND BEYOND

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 I discussed the collection of baseline data, an ethnographic inquiry into students' reading and writing attitudes and practices and the action research component which involves the teaching of three reading strategies. During each stage of the research it was pointed out how the data were collated and processed (please see Chapter 5). Chapter 6 provides a holistic picture of the issues discussed thus far outlining the implication of these findings for an understanding of students' reading practices and motivation. This chapter draws on the responses of twelve students who participated in the interviews, and the sixty-two students (including the twelve above-mentioned) who completed the questionnaire. Reference will be made to the two groups of participants in the sections to follow.

Throughout the chapters thus far, the importance of reading for the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) has been stressed. Various researchers (Jardine 1986; Perkins 1991; Pretorius 1996; Balfour 2000) have shown that many students entering tertiary education are unable to cope with the sophisticated levels of reading that are required in higher education. In an attempt to understand the reasons for this, I provide in this chapter an ethnographic account of the students' attitudes and practices towards reading, at the same time problematising the various issues relating to their reading behaviours. This latter aspect of the research traces students' reading patterns from childhood to the present time. The ethnographic account would shed some light on the cultural and everyday practices of the students and how these impact on their attitudes and practices towards reading. It would also provide information on the motivation levels of the students. A discussion of the students' family attitude and practices of reading is given in an attempt to explore whether the family reading behaviours impact on the students reading patterns. Further, I argue that attitude, background and motivation are the key to the "learning to read" and "reading to learn" process. Overall, the above information would help in an understanding of the role of reading in the students' personal lives, and how far this role

has been shaped by early family and school experiences, and if the students' home literacies interface with the academic literacy norms of higher education.

There are three sections to this chapter. The first describes the students' language ability on entrance to the Durban University of Technology. This is important because it will provide an indication of the students' level of proficiency in the English language, which would have some impact on their academic success. In the second section, some background information on the students and their family is provided, whilst the third section discusses the students' background and knowledge of reading, with a particular focus on reading strategies. These two latter sections illustrate my argument that reading strategy interventions are essential and problematise the assumptions and beliefs held by students and educators towards reading. The Chapter concludes by drawing together the major findings from the different sections.

6.2 Students' academic ability at entrance to the Durban University of Technology

In order to determine the levels of competence of the participants on entrance to the DUT, two test results were used, namely the students' matriculation (Grade 12) examination results and the TELP test. Each of these results is discussed below in greater detail.

6.2.1 Matriculation (Grade 12) examination results

In the first week of lectures (February 2004), I examined the matriculation examination results of the twelve students who were involved in the ethnographic and action research components of the study. These students were from the Faculty of Health Science and were registered on the extended first year programme for a Diploma in Dental Technology. The Academic Literacy course was part of the extended programme and was a requirement (*c.f.* Chapter 5). The focus when examining students' matriculation examination results was their language symbols and whether they had studied English as a first or additional language. This information provided an indication of students' proficiency in the English language, which is the primary medium of instruction in most educational institutions in South Africa.

Recent research (Volbrecht 2002:229) has shown that students entering tertiary education require a certain minimum level of proficiency in English in order to be

successful. However, I do recognize that the issues relating to academic literacies are not just associated with language proficiency, but also to the acquisition of discipline specific literacies. Within New Literacy Studies (NLS), as discussed in Chapter 2, language proficiency goes beyond just grammatical and lexical competence. It is located within a broader understanding of proficiency that involves academic conventions such as writing/reporting using a particular format and emphasizing relevance. These academic conventions may be foreign to many of our students.

Of the twelve participants in this study, there were six males and six females. Nine were EAL students and three were EFL students. The first and additional languages studied by students are presented in Figure 6.1. An examination of the symbols obtained by the students in their first language and additional language reveal that in the majority of cases (eleven out of twelve) the symbol obtained for the first language was either higher (for five students) or the same (for six students) as that obtained for the additional language. Therefore, on average the students performed better in their first language¹. For four of the students who had a higher first language symbol² their additional language symbol was only one symbol lower. For example, Sibongile³ had obtained a “B” symbol in her first language (Zulu) and a “C” symbol in her additional language (English). The exception was Andiswa who had obtained a “B” symbol in Zulu and an “F” symbol in English.

In using the data in Figure 6.1 overleaf, I am aware of studies within the South African context, such as Huysamen (1999), that have shown the poor reliability of matriculation (Grade 12) scores to the extent that success in school English examinations does not necessarily imply proficiency in the language. Thus, an additional tool used to determine the English language proficiency of students is the language proficiency test administered by DUT, which is discussed overleaf.

¹ This is already an indication of the need for better and more thorough instruction through the mother tongue in schools.

² The percentage equivalent for each symbol is as follows: “A” is from 80%+; “B” is between 70% to 69%; “C” between 60% to 59%; “D” between 40% to 49%; and “F” between 30% to 39%.

³ It must be noted that the names of all participant used in this thesis have been changed to protect their identity.

Figure 6.1: Matriculation examination language results: November 2003

	Name	Gender	First Language	Symbol	Additional Language	Symbol
1	Edna	F	Setswana	D	English	D
2	Andiswa	F	Zulu	B	English	F
3	Pumlani	M	Sepedi	C	English	C
4	Thembe	F	Zulu	C	English	C
5	Sibongile	F	Zulu	B	English	C
6	Patrick	M	Sepedi	E	English	E
7	Lunga	M	Zulu	C	English	C
8	Vilakazi	M	Zulu	C	English	D
9	Melanie	F	English ⁴	D	Afrikaans	E
10	Yasteel	F	English	E	Afrikaans	D
11	Shikaar	M	English	C	Afrikaans	D
12	Dhiren	M	English	C	Afrikaans	C

6.2.2 The TELP Language Proficiency Test

The language proficiency test used at the DUT is referred to as the TELP placement test in English for academic purposes (*c.f.* Chapter 5). This test was given to students as a pre-test at the start of the academic year 2004 and again as a post-test at the end of 2004. In this section of the thesis only the results from the pre-test are presented. It is more appropriate to present the post-test results in Chapter 8, after a discussion of the action research component of the study as the intention of the post-test was to track any improvement in students' language proficiency after a series of reading interventions.

Figure 6.2 below shows that the EAL students (students 1 to 9) perform much better generally in the MCQs than in sentence construction. In fact, all the EAL students but one obtained less than 50% in the latter section. On the other hand, the three EFL students obtained more than 50% for both the sections. The difference in performance by the EAL students for the MCQs and for the constructed sentences is not surprising, since for the MCQs students are required to choose an answer from a given set of alternatives. This exercise (MCQs) tests comprehension at a very basic level. On the other hand, the sentence construction exercise requires the students to "produce" language, that is, to write as opposed to select language (Yeld 2001). One may, therefore, conclude that the students' performance in the MCQs is not an adequate

⁴ Melanie: Her home language is Greek. Since Greek is not offered as a subject at school Melanie had no option but to study English as her first language. She was, therefore, considered an EAL student.

indicator for determining their capability to engage in more sophisticated levels of comprehension that is required for understanding, extending and elaborating the meaning of texts. It is important to contextualize the students' performance in the TELP pre-test within the development of their literacy practices from childhood to secondary school. This discussion begins in the next section where information on the student and his/her family background is presented.

Figure 6.2: TELP test results: January 2004

	Name	Pre-test		
		MCQs 49 marks	Sentences 51 marks	Total 100 marks
1	Edna	24	11	35
2	Andiswa	16	0	16
3	Pumlani	33	22	55
4	Thembie	30	25	55
5	Sibongile	31	20	51
6	Patrick	22	6	28
7	Lunga	30	22	52
8	Vilakazi	40	24	64
9	Melanie	30	26	56
10	Yasteel	39	31	70
11	Shikaar	44	33	77
12	Dhiren	42	40	82

6.3 Students' and family background information

In this section a brief overview of the students' backgrounds is given in order to provide a biographical context which will assist in understanding and appreciating the environment in which the students were raised and schooled and in which their literacy habits were formed. Further, a considerable amount of research has shown that family background and home environment has an influence on oral and written language development (Heath, 1982a,1983; Vygotsky 1986; Genishi 1992; Morrow 1993; Rose 2004). It appears that children from language-enriched⁵ homes are more likely to succeed in literacy acquisition when their home language and literacy routines are similar to those of the classroom and the school (Ruddell and Ruddell 1994:95). Thus

⁵ Language-enriched: Homes in which parents frequently read/tell stories to their children, are always engaging in conversation with them, and in which children are exposed to a variety of reading materials.

the information provided in this section will shed some light on the reading and writing attitudes and practices of the students.

The 12 participants in the study were in the age group eighteen to twenty-three years old. Five of the EAL students lived in the DUT residences because some come from as far as Limpopo Province. Eight of the EAL students studied the following languages as their first language at school: Zulu (five), Sepedi (two) and Setswana (one). These were also their home languages. The ninth EAL student whose home language was Greek had to study English as her first language since Greek was not offered as a school subject. Prior to going to school, many of the EAL students almost always conversed in their home language. Some of them only began learning the English language in Grade 3. Even then, because of the difficulty they experienced in learning the language, teaching and learning occurred more frequently in their home language. This was not simply a case of 'code-switching'^{6,7}. Several studies involving ex-DET schools (Mabizela 1994; Hibbert 1995; Leibowitz 1995) have shown that although the medium of instruction is English in these schools, students have little formal or informal experience in English as educators themselves grapple with the English language. In addition, some students' problems were exacerbated by the fact that their home language was of a different dialect to that used by the educator. For example, Patrick whose first language is Sepedi, responded as follows:

Sharita:	Do you read and write in your first language?
Patrick:	I do read and write but the dialect is different from school so I still struggle with the language even though it is my first language. I manage to pass through the books.

(Interview 1: 30/04/04)

The EFL students, on the other hand, did not experience any of these problems. All three of the EFL students came from well-resourced schools and to a certain degree language enriched environments. In contrast, seven of the nine EAL students studied at

⁶ Code-switching is often defined as the use of more than one language or variety of language in the course of a single discourse (Nwoye 1993:365).

⁷ Meyer (1995) surveyed 872 ex-Department of Education and Training (DET) schools. The DET schools arose from the racially segregated schooling system of apartheid. These schools were for Black African children and were coordinated by the DET. Meyer (1995) found that at Grade 12 level, the official policy regarding the medium of instruction (that is, English) was ignored by about one-third of educators and students. Learning in these classrooms took place either in English only, a vernacular only, or a mixture of English or a vernacular.

schools that were poorly resourced^{8,9}, implying that for these students the environment was not conducive to providing the necessary level of academic support. Research (Elley 1994; Allington 2002; Pretorius and Machet 2004) shows that students from well resourced schools tend to attain higher literacy levels than students from high poverty schools. This point is supported by Bernstein (1975) and Heath (1983).

Only six of the twenty-four parents obtained a post-matriculation qualification. Some of the qualifications included a Higher Diploma in Education, a Nursing Degree, a Bachelor of Technology Diploma in Oral Hygiene, and a Diploma in Information Technology. Approximately half of the remaining eighteen parents had schooling restricted to primary education, that is, below Grade 8, while four parents left school in Grade 10. The ages of the parents ranged from thirty-eight years to seventy-seven years and they occupied a wide range of professions ranging from domestic workers, clerks to educators. In general, the EAL students come from large families, for example, Andiswa has seven sisters and two brothers and Thembe has six brothers and two sisters. Apart from Melanie, all the other EAL students come from poor or low-income households while the EFL students come from middle income-homes.

Research conducted by Heath (1983) and Geisler (1994) has shown that students from middle class backgrounds are more likely to have exposure to the interaction patterns with texts that are similar to those encountered in schools or higher education. This implies that, given their background, the majority of students in this study would not have acquired the expected schooled literacies to a sufficiently high standard so as to enable easy assimilation of academic literacy. According to McKenna (2004:165), in South Africa as well as in other countries, access to elevated literacies parallels socio-economic and cultural divisions. However, in South Africa such access also parallels language divisions. Thus, McKenna argues that the difficulties experienced by students are often conveniently accounted for in terms of their home language, rather than in terms of their socio-economic or cultural backgrounds.

⁸ Poorly resourced: some examples include no electricity, no library, inadequate supply of text books, poor ablution facilities and dilapidated classroom furniture. During May 2001, the Minister of Education reported (Pretorius 2002:vi) that out of the 27 148 schools in the country 45% do not have electricity (12 257 schools); 27% are without running water (7409 schools); 66% do not have adequate sanitation (based on a ratio of 1 toilet per 30 students (17 907 schools); 11% have no sanitation at all (3 188 schools); and 34% do not have any telephones.

⁹ In a survey conducted by Hartley *et al.* (1998a, 1998b) it was found that only between 5% (Northern Province) to 52% (Western Cape) of primary and secondary schools have library facilities.

Having provided a brief overview of the students' background, in the next section specific issues relating to reading and understanding the reading behaviours of the students are discussed.

6.4 Students' background and knowledge of reading

Reading is integral to the learning process especially in tertiary education. Research, for example, Pretorius (1996), has shown that there is a strong link between reading proficiency and academic success. This is found to hold true not only for EAL students, but also for EFL students. Several researchers (Carrell 1989; Mbise 1993; Fasheh 1995) who focused on EAL students argue that reading is probably the most important skill for students in the learning process. Other researchers (Oakhill and Patel 1991; Swanson and De La Paz 1998) have shown that reading strategy interventions can help improve reading comprehension. However, prior to implementing interventions to improve to students' reading comprehension, it is essential first to ascertain their relevant background since, as Heath (1983) points out, our norms of how and why to read, write, speak and listen are socially constructed. These social constructs of reading and writing vary from one cultural and socio-economic group to the next. Further, Wells (1986) argues that the students' early literacy events seem to play a major role in determining later educational success. Hence, an understanding of the students' background and knowledge of reading is provided in the sections to follow.

6.4.1 Family attitudes towards and practices of reading

The data accumulated from the project interviews conducted by myself over a period of approximately nine months in 2004 reveal that those parents who have a qualification up to Grade 12 and beyond, as well as those in professional and semi-professional occupations, engaged in reading at home. However, for the EAL students most of the materials read by their parents were newspapers and magazines written in their mother tongue. The popular newspapers included *Ilanga* and *Sowetan* and popular magazines included *Drum* and *Bona*. Furthermore, only seven of the twenty-four parents may be classified as regular readers and six as occasional readers. The remainder either did not read or could not read. Some students indicated that their parents could not afford to purchase reading material on a regular basis, while a few indicated that their parents

could not afford to buy them at all¹⁰. Sometimes they would borrow magazines or newspapers from friends or relatives. Rural communities are further disadvantaged by the fact that indirect reading materials such as catalogues and advertisements from major retailers or chain stores are not distributed to them. As a result of the above circumstances, reading was not perceived as an activity on its own – there was no space or time assigned for reading by many of the EAL parents. These points have been affirmed most recently (in 2005) in a statement by the South African Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor: “most of our learners, through no fault of their own, come from homes where there are no books, where parents cannot read or write, or where parents just do not read” (Brown 2005:3). Generally, parents with a limited educational background are not able to actively engage in the child’s learning process, as they are not able to comprehend and respond to school notices or attend and contribute to school parent meetings. Further, the notices sent home and meetings held at school are almost always written and conducted in English and this immediately excludes many of the African parents. Thus, the domains of home and school are kept separate by both children and parents once the children go to school. A possible consequence of the above pattern is the finding that a very large number of the students and their siblings read limited material apart from that related to their schoolwork and that they do not receive much support or encouragement from their parents.

It is important to note that several researchers (Labov 1977; Gallimore *et al.* 1974; Moll 1992) have pointed out that while most children from lower socio-economic backgrounds have not acquired the literacy practices that are valued in higher education, they nevertheless come from homes and communities with literacy practices and rules of communication which follow a different set of norms. Moll (1992:227) argues that these households are not “socially or intellectually barren”. He found that the real challenge was “a lack of extended social networks between home and school and appreciation of the rich language and literacy resources offered by the home and community”.

While many research studies (Gallimore *et al.* 1974; Heath 1983; Moll 1992) have made a connection between socio-economic status and academic success, other studies (Kellaghan *et al.* 1993; Henderson and Berla 1994) have shown that there is a strong

¹⁰ Five students indicated that their parents could not afford to purchase newspapers or magazines, while seven students indicated that their parents would occasionally buy the newspaper.

correlation between parental involvement and increased academic achievement. Parental involvement needs to commence at birth and continue through adolescence. Henderson and Berla (1994) argue that a home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than the family's income, education level or cultural background. Therefore, in order to acquire an understanding of the extent of the parental involvement in promoting reading among the students, the students' childhood memories of reading were explored.

6.4.2 Childhood memories of reading

Understanding childhood practices of reading and writing is the key to any ethnographic research on reading and writing since childhood practices of reading may have an influence on the reading behaviours of an individual in later life. As early as the 1950s, research (Milner 1951) showed that children who achieved academically came from enriched environments. They had more exposure to reading material, interacted verbally more frequently with their parents, and were read to more often in comparison to low achievers. Vygotsky (1962, 1986) found that the amount of interaction that occurred between adults and the child had an influence on the child's language acquisition. The South African policy for Early Childhood Development (ECD)¹¹ emphasises the critical role of ECD as a foundation for lifelong learning. Reading is viewed as a central activity which is essential to the development¹² of the child (Department of Education 1996:3). Therefore, in this research I considered it important to probe the level of awareness of reading among the students, starting from childhood.

A recollection of the students' childhood memories of reading shows that all except one of the EAL students had similar experiences, namely, their parents neither read to them nor encouraged them to read. The exception was Melanie, a student of Greek origin for whom English was an additional language. Only some of the Zulu students have recollections of being told Zulu stories and poems by their parents and grandparents. A few remember looking at pictures in books. It would, therefore, appear that the culture of reading was not inculcated in the EAL students who formed the sample for the study at DUT. Rather, it would seem that they come from a more "oral cultural" background. Hence, many of the EAL students did not have much experience with print before going

¹¹ This policy is called the Early Childhood Development Policy of 1996.

to school and consequently, since books are not an integral part of the EAL students' lives from childhood, they often have difficulty learning to read and reading to learn. Many researchers (Durkin 1966; Clay 1991; Ruddell and Ruddell 1994) found that children who have been read to before they entered school are more likely to be successful in learning to read. "These children approach print with high expectations of its meaning and possess knowledge and familiarity with story structure and the language of the text" (Ruddell and Ruddell 1994:93).

Ong (1982) speaks of the great divide¹³ between literate and oral cultures. He argues that the introduction of literacy (that is, the advent of the alphabetic system and writing) saw an important change in human development. It affected both the socio-economic environment and the ways of thinking of human cultures. In fact, according to Havelock (1963) in Lankshear (1999:4) "literacy is seen as a key factor, if not the salient factor, that enables the transition from 'primitive' to 'advanced' culture". On the other hand, the ideological model (*c.f.* Chapter 2) challenges the literacy versus orality distinction. It questions the elevated status given to writing and advocates for the acknowledgement that some texts have different functions in some language communities. Therefore, researchers (Barton 1994; Street 1995) within NLS oppose the great divide theory, arguing that the type of literacy, written or oral, format, and style is determined by the particular situation. The notion of the existence of many literacies, each arising from socio-cultural practices is integral to NLS.

The above discussion highlights two factors to be considered in my project: first, the students had very limited exposure to reading material and second, they were not encouraged by their parents to read. The next section explores the impact of these experiences on the students when they enter school, as well as the manner in which reading is taught in school.

6.4.3 School experiences of reading

A person's experiences of reading in school may very well impact on his or her attitude to reading in later years. According to Pretorius (2000), while many educators

¹² Development applies to all processes by which children, from birth to the age of nine, grow and thrive mentally, emotionally, and socially (Baatjies 2003).

¹³ The great divide between literate and oral tradition became known as the great divide theory. This theory has its origins in the Vygotskian (1978) premise that the mind alters the stimuli from which it is constituted.

acknowledge that reading is important, no direct attention is given to reading after about Grade 4. Educators generally perceive reading as a leisure time activity. As a result, “for many children reading develops at a suboptimal level and they have problems accessing, understanding and integrating information from written texts” (34). These difficulties in reading to learn are experienced by students throughout their schooling years and are also perpetuated at tertiary level. The schooling experiences of reading for the participants involved in this study, therefore, serve as valuable information in understanding attitudes and practices towards reading.

In this study the schooling experiences of the EAL students and the EFL students were found to be very different. In the case of the former all the students started to read only when they entered primary school. However, some of these students began to learn English only in Grade 3. On the other hand, all of the EFL students knew how to read some words before entering primary school. It is, therefore, seen that the students’ schooling experiences of reading correlate with their early childhood experiences. Both the EAL and EFL students were taught in school to read in a similar manner, that is, by decoding. They recall first learning the letters of the alphabet, then words, phrases and then sentences. Often the educator would say the word or sentence and the students would repeat after the educator. Many of the students reported that learning to read stopped either in Grade 3 or Grade 4. According to Pretorius (2002) once students are able to decode words, not much assistance is provided to help students to make the transition from decoding to reading with comprehension, or to proceed from simple and familiar narrative texts to more complicated and unfamiliar expository texts (for example, academic text books). Consequently, many of these students will experience difficulty in reading to learn. Cummins (2001, online: accessed 2005) says that while decoding skills are necessary they are not a sufficient condition for reading comprehension development. He argues further that instruction in phonics can enable L2 students to acquire word recognition and decoding skills in their L2 to a sufficiently high level although their knowledge of the L2 may remain limited. However, acquiring decoding skills does not automatically imply proficiency in reading comprehension. The importance of continuing with some structured teaching of reading after the decoding stage is highlighted by the following phrase (DES, 1975:92 in Perera 1984:276): “.....to discontinue instruction at this point [that is, the decoding stage] is rather like halting the training of a pianist once he can play the scales and a few elementary tunes”.

Most students remember reading graded readers in primary school. As their reading improved they were given more difficult storybooks to read. They were usually grouped in class according to their ability to read the different graded readers. Many students recalled reading for marks in secondary school (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table B). This usually took the form of a prepared or unseen reading passage. Students do not recall being given any feedback on the manner in which they read. Reading was definitely not taught in secondary school. From Grades 10 to 12, students were required, for their English lessons, to study a prescribed set book and a Shakespearean play. In addition to these prescribed texts, the EFL students stated that they were also required to read about three to six novels per year, depending on the grade. For their oral assessment, the educator would choose one book that students read and they were then required to present a review on that book. While only some of the EAL students had similar experiences, the others stated that book reviews only happened in Grade 12 and they were required to read fewer books. Students were not able to recall a favourite book read or a name of an author they enjoyed. The above points suggest that not much emphasis was placed on the importance of reading. From the perspective of the student it seems that reading was viewed as a 'once-off' activity to satisfy assessment requirements. Further reading as a hobby was not encouraged with little or no exposure to the different range of genres available. Hence, the question of selecting favourite authors was not one that the students needed to address in school. Furthermore, the fact that the EFL students had different school reading experiences from some EAL students is also suggestive of the disparities existing within urban and rural schools.

It is important to note that until recently, within the South African context, very few graded readers were published in the indigenous languages and expository texts in these languages were almost non-existent. Consequently, the EAL students were not provided the opportunity to master reading comprehension skills in their home or primary languages. While they may have decoding skills, they acquire few reading comprehension skills to transfer to English (Pretorius 2000). This situation is aggravated by the lack of resources, such as the available collection of narrative texts, which further disadvantages the student. As a result, many EAL students shift from a limited experience of reading in their first language to an extensive range of expository text in the second or additional language when a change to English as a medium of instruction

takes place. Further research (Saracho and Dayton 1991; Shelly-Robinson 1996) has shown that when children encounter books that reflect their culture, values and language then they are more motivated to read. Having pointed out the students' childhood and school experiences of reading, the impact of these experiences on the students' present day perspective of reading is examined next.

6.4.4 Students' perspectives of reading

Most of the questions that students were asked in their first interview were similar to those in the student and lecturer questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 2 and 3). This was done in order to corroborate information received from the questionnaires with responses received from the interviews (*c.f.* Appendix 4 for interview schedule) and to clarify points that were unclear in the student questionnaire. Wherever possible, in the discussion below, information obtained from the questionnaires (*c.f.* Appendix 2 and 3) and the interviews are discussed together to provide a more holistic account of the students' perspectives of reading.

In the interviews, students were asked if they enjoyed reading and how often they read. A significant majority of the students (eleven out of twelve) indicated that they enjoyed reading, but mostly 'light' reading rather than academic material. The reluctance of students to engage in academic reading could be due to the fact that the genres of these texts are foreign to the students as measured by their limited earlier exposure to reading and its importance. The fact that students shy away from reading academic material will not allow them to engage regularly with their discipline content and this will have an adverse effect on their academic performance.

In reading for pleasure, the materials cited by the twelve participants ranged from novels, popular magazines and newspapers, with magazines being the most popular¹⁴. Many EAL students enjoyed reading the Zulu magazine called *Bona*. Other magazines read included *True Love* and *Drum* magazines. The Zulu newspaper *Ilanga* and the English newspaper, *Sowetan*, also were popular. The few students who indicated they read novels, preferred fiction novels like romance (one participant mention the Sweet Valley Books), mystery and adventure novels (the Hardy Boys was cited by one of the

participant). However, a large proportion of the students indicated that finding the time to read material apart from those related to their studies was a huge problem. This is illustrated by the following responses:

Sharita: Do you enjoy reading?
Sibongile: Ya, although I don't get time for it.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

Sharita: Do you read often?
Pumlani: I used to read novels but now I don't have time. You can say its time management. I can even prepare my timetable but I don't manage. I still don't have time.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

Thus, at present students are reading more academic material than reading for pleasure. Yet Matjila and Pretorius (2004:19) point out that "it is only through reading for pleasure that learners develop the reading skills that enable them to deal more easily with the more serious task of reading to learn".

Many students,¹⁵ especially those living in the DUT residences, stated that they did not have regular access to and could not afford to purchase magazines and newspapers on a regular basis. The students therefore read only when they came across these and this could vary from once a week to every few weeks or even months¹⁶. Some students indicated that they sometimes borrowed magazines and newspapers from their neighbours or friends (for example, Dhiren, Interview 1: 30/04/04 and Lunga, Interview 3: 2/09/04). Most students reported that they did not experience any difficulty reading magazines and generally chose novels that were easy to understand. A common reading practice was for students to skim through a magazine or newspaper and focus on an article which caught their attention. For example,

¹⁴ In the wider sample of sixty-two students, newspapers were listed as most popular (64.51%), followed by magazines (61.29%) and novels (40.32%). Only one student reported that he read religious texts, cartoons and poetry (c.f. Appendix 15).

¹⁵ Patrick, Edna, Pumlan, Vilakazi, Andiswa, Lunga and Dhiren stated that they did not have regular access to newspapers and magazines.

¹⁶ In a survey conducted with foundation students at the University of Cape Town it was found that most students "read newspapers seldom or only once a week" (Paxton 1998:139).

Dhiren: ...when I see a good article in a paper I read it. You know, when I'm going through the paper and an article catches my eye, I read it or if someone tells me there's something in the paper then I would like to see what it is.

(Interview 1: 30/04/04)

Sibongile: I read – not actually reading just checking the topics. If something is interesting then I read but not often like everyday.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

A diverse range of responses was obtained when the students were asked how often they read. It was found that of the sixty-two students, the largest number of students (approximately 35%) indicated that they read on a daily basis, while approximately a quarter of the students indicated that they read only once a week. Only 16.12% (10 students) reported that they read at least two to three times a week and 11.29% (7 students) read just once a month. The remaining six students (9.67%) read whenever they had time or when they were bored. No significant differences were noted between the EAL and EFL students' responses to this question. It would, therefore, appear that reading is not promoted enough amongst both EAL and EFL students. In analysing the responses to the above question, one would expect the category "daily" to receive a larger percentage but this was not the case. It is of major concern that such a low percentage of the students read on a daily basis. At tertiary education level one would expect students to be reading daily, even if this means merely going over their lecture notes. These results could indicate that students tend to rely solely on the notes given to them by their lecturers and to a very small extent on their prescribed books. At tertiary education level students need to supplement the notes received from their lecturers. In the interviews with the students the issue of time constraints was raised repeatedly by both EAL and EFL students. Yet, according to the mainstream lecturer^{17, 18} the students on the extended programme have much more free time than the students who are on the mainstream programme. There could be various reasons for students reporting a lack of time, including a lack of adequate time management and organisational skills, laziness, lack of motivation, weaker students who do not have the capacity to cope, and a genuinely heavy time-table with unrealistic expectations from the lecturer.

¹⁷ The term 'mainstream lecturer' is used to refer to the lecturer who is responsible for teaching discipline specific content.

¹⁸ An informal discussion was held with the mainstream lecturer on this issue.

When probing whether the students read recommended material related to the discipline/courses that they are studying, once again it was found that their frequency of reading was not sufficient, with approximately only one third of the students indicating that they read often (that is, above 50% of the time)¹⁹. At tertiary level one would expect the category “often” to have received the highest percentage because students need to supplement the notes they get from their lecturers in order to improve academic performance. Some students who reported that they read occasionally, elaborated on this topic by saying that they read only in preparation for an assignment/project or a test (*c.f.* Appendix 15). These responses (from the questionnaire) correlated with the findings from the interviews where almost all the students indicated that they did not regularly consult additional reading materials. On the few occasions that they did so, the purpose was to complete an assignment that was graded as illustrated by the following examples:

- Shikaar: For my assignments I have to read other materials - only when I'm working on assignments.
(Interview 1: 14/04/04)
- Sibongile: No, I use the other books like when I'm doing assignments.
(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

In the interviews, only two of the twelve students indicated that they engaged in additional reading in order to improve their understanding of the subject content. For example:

- Sharita: Apart from the prescribed textbooks and lecture notes do you consult additional textbooks?
- Lunga: Ya, but not the ordinary dictionaries, there are specific dictionaries for my Department. Most of the words we use in our Department are not in the Oxford dictionary.
- Sharita: Do you go to the library and use other books, for example, journals?
- Lunga: Ya.
- Sharita: Only for assignments or all the time?
- Lunga: Sometimes if there is something, you see I like understanding things. I'm doing dental technology but I'd also like to know about myself like the digestive system, you know like the

¹⁹ Of the sixty-two students, 43.54% recorded sometimes (about 50% of the time), 33.87% indicated often (above 50% of the time), 20.96% said occasionally (rarely), and one student (1.61%) reported that he never reads because he has no time.

- human biology things. Sometimes I read to find out what's going on.
- Sharita: Do you find these material easy or difficult to read?
- Lunga: Those in the library are difficult especially the words that are used for human biology. For example, in my department there are words that some are doing homeopathy may not understand.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

Lunga's last comment suggests that terminologies used in one discipline may be specific to that discipline only. Similarly, the academic literacy 'rules and conventions' may vary across disciplines. Many students enter tertiary education with home literacies that are not congruent to the literacy practices of the institution. Apart from this challenge, they also have to acquire the literacy practices of their individual disciplines. Students who are unable to make these adjustments struggle to succeed academically.

For some students reading was restricted to their lecture notes and study guides as indicated by Yasteel:

- Sharita: Do you have prescribed textbooks in your subjects?
- Yasteel: Yes.
- Sharita: Do you make use of them?
- Yasteel: I do, but only when I need to. Other than that I don't need them because I have notes that the lecturer gives.

(Interview 1: 30/04/04)

In general, the students reported that they found their prescribed textbooks difficult to read. They experienced problems in understanding subject specific terminology as illustrated by Vilakazi "I find it difficult. It is easier to read a novel than a text book" (Interview 1: 28/04/04). The difficulty in understanding discipline specific terminology is also expressed above by Lunga who cites human biology as an example. Students indicated further that many of their recommended books were also difficult to read. According to Perera (1984:275) the chances of full comprehension are reduced if "unfamiliar subject matter expressed in technical vocabulary combines with intrinsically demanding sentence construction"²⁰.

²⁰ In an ethnographic investigation by Clark (1993) on 'accessible text materials' at the University of Cape Town, it was found that students had difficulty with their science text books (which are context reduced) because they had not developed appropriate reading strategies, thus further highlighting the need for reading strategy interventions.

In the interviews the twelve students were divided in their responses when asked if their lecturers encouraged them to read²¹. For example:

Shikaar: Sometimes, some of them do but not all the time because when you are having a lecture on a certain topic reading does not come up a lot.

(Interview 1: 14/04/04)

Shikaar's comment is of great concern. Apart from reading rarely being mentioned, the impression created is that lecturers are still using the traditional chalk and talk method of teaching. This method characterizes students as reproducers of knowledge rather than producers of knowledge and may be linked to what Freire (1972) refers to as the jug-n-mug or transmission approach. This point also tends to come across from Yasteel's comment where it seems that lecturers provide students with lecture notes without creating situations where students are forced to consult reading material to compile their own notes. Thus, students tend to rely solely on the notes provided by the lecturers.

A divided response was also given by the students to the question "Do lecturers ask you to read in preparation for a lecture?" Of the twelve students, two stated 'yes', five responded with a 'no' and five stated 'sometimes'. However, a notable difference was recorded when the students were asked if their lecturers encouraged them to read after they lectured a particular section. In this case a significant majority (ten out of twelve) of the students responded with an emphatic "no". According to research conducted by McKenna (2004), lecturers at the DUT expect their students to have acquired a certain level of reading and writing literacy on entrance to the institution and if students are lacking these literacy practices then they should be sent for additional "fix-up" lessons. Mainstream lecturers often see these "fix-up" lessons as falling outside the domains of their disciplines and which are unrelated to their practice as lecturers. Hence, these "fix-up" lessons become the responsibility of the academic development practitioner. Having discussed, in this section, students' perspectives of reading, I wish now to discuss some specific purposes students have for reading because motivation is widely regarded (Guthrie 2000) as central to the acquisition of new language and knowledge.

²¹ Three of the students (25%) responded with a 'no'. Of the remaining students four stated 'yes' and five

6.4.5 Student goals for reading

The first open-response question in Section A of the Student Questionnaire was: “Describe some specific reasons (goals) a person might have for reading?” While eleven students listed just one goal, the majority of the students listed between two and three goals. The modal number of goals listed by a student was two (range one to five). After compiling a list of all the responses given by students, it was found that the responses could be classified into the three broad categories used by Taraban *et al.* (2000:290-291), namely, educational goals, casual reading, and practical reasons for reading. Please see Figure 6.3.

As shown in Figure 6.3, the highest number of goals recorded related to education goals: increase general information/knowledge 56.45%; obtain better understanding of subject/topic 38.71%; for educational purposes 22.58%; learn vocabulary 20.96%; improve reading and reading speed 14.51% and to improve language 8.05%. The second category, related to casual reading, was divided as follows: relaxation/pleasure 32.25%; boredom 3.23% and escape world 1.61%. The last category, related to practical reasons for reading, was distributed as follows: to know what is happening in the world/current issues 20.97%; to communicate effectively 1.61% and to help other people 1.61%. The distribution of these goals is similar to those listed by the participants in the studies of Saumell *et al.* (1999) and Taraban *et al.* (2000) and which indicated that reading was done more for learning than for enjoyment and escape. Yet reading for pleasure has been found to improve reading comprehension, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development as well as writing style (Krashen 1993). Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive and rewarding effects of reading for pleasure (Krashen 1984; 1993; Flowers 2003).

Figure 6.3: Student goals for reading

Goals	Percentages
Education Goals:	
- Increase general information/knowledge	56.45
- Obtain better understanding of subject/topic	35.71
- For educational purposes	22.58
- Learn vocabulary	20.96
- Improve reading and reading speed	14.51
- Improve language	8.06
Casual Reading:	
- Relaxation/pleasure	32.25
- Boredom	3.23
- Escape world	1.61
Practical Reasons:	
- Know what is happening in the world/current issues	20.97
- Communicate effectively	1.61
- Help other people	1.61

In retrospect, while this first question did provide an indication as to how much students knew about reading for different purposes, it did not provide any information as to their specific goals for reading. Therefore, this point was further probed in the interviews. The majority of students indicated that although they read mostly for educational purposes they did this only when forced to, for example, when completing an assignment or in preparation for a test. Other than this, because of the demands made on them by their disciplines, they have very little time to devote to casual / practical reading. It would appear that the students are not interested in reading for pleasure or to improve their general knowledge, but simply engage in reading for the sake of passing examinations. This reading pattern is not unique to the South African higher education system. Kaur and Thiagarajah (1999, online: accessed 2005) have reported a similar occurrence amongst Malaysian students, with their Minister of Education commenting that “most students read only to pass exams and do not read for pleasure”.

The fact that the students reported that they only read when forced to would suggest that they are only extrinsically motivated. Therefore, the challenge is for lecturers to think of ways to raise / build their students' intrinsic levels of motivation for reading. The concept of motivation is not a simple one. Motivation is multifaceted, meaning that within every individual some motivational factors will be stronger than others. Guthrie (2000), in his

work on reading motivation, distinguishes between task-mastery orientation and performance orientation. In task-mastery orientation individuals seek to improve their skills and accept new challenges and are dedicated to content understanding and learning (Ames and Archer 1988; Dweck and Leggett 1988; Ames 1992). With performance orientation individuals try to seek favourable responses from others on their ability (Thorkildsen and Nicholls 1998). Individuals with performance orientation tend to use surface strategies for reading and focus on completing a task rather than to understand or enjoy reading (Meece and Miller 1999). Performance orientation is seen as extrinsic motivation. Some researchers argue that motivation is essential for a student to become an engaged reader. “An engaged reader is one who reads for different purposes, scaffolds knowledge to build new learning, and participates in meaningful social interactions around reading” (Colker, online(b): accessed 2005). Engagement in reading is strongly correlated with reading achievement to the extent that it enables the student to overcome any disadvantages due to socio-economic status or parents’ educational backgrounds.

It must be noted that while in most instances the reading goals listed by EAL and EFL students were almost the same in percentages²², there was a significant difference in their responses for the category casual reading, that is, reading for relaxation/pleasure. Only 9% of the 32.25% of the responses for relaxation / pleasure were listed by EAL students. This could be due to the fact that some of the EAL students come from oral cultural backgrounds²³. It must be noted that, in the interviews, although some students could recall their parents / grandparents telling them fairy tales/nursery rhymes in their home languages, many of them could not remember being told stories or being read to. Also, many of the students come from very poor homes where the purchasing of books or magazines is considered a luxury. Therefore, in their homes they have not been exposed to situations where books are lying around and the temptation to pick up a book or magazine and page or browse through is lost, although some students did indicate that they do on occasion borrow magazines or newspapers from neighbours or friends. In the next section I explore the ways in which students handle difficulties whilst reading.

²² Percentages of the responses for the different categories and subcategories for the two groups of students (EAL and EFL students) is shown in Appendix 15.

²³ The orality versus literacy distinction has been touched upon earlier in Section 6.4.2 of this chapter.

6.4.6 Attending to difficulties in reading

The second open-response question in Section A of the Student Questionnaire (c.f. Appendix 2) asked, “What are some of the things you would do if you are having difficulty understanding what you are reading?” The modal number of strategies listed by a participant was two (range one to four). While the majority of students (75.8%) indicated that they would seek assistance from a friend or someone who understands the work, only six of the forty-seven students indicated that they would seek help from their lecturers. A large proportion of students (51.61%) indicated that they would use a dictionary to determine the meaning of an unknown word, while 45.16% of the students indicated that they read the text more than once in order to try and understand. A significant difference between EAL and EFL students’ responses was noted for the response “read text more than once”. Only a quarter of the 45.16% responses received were from EAL students. Earlier (c.f. Section 6.4.4) in exploring the reading habits of the students no significant differences were found between the responses of the EAL and EFL students. Therefore, the fact that a large number of EFL students “read the text more than once” in comparison to the EAL students may appear to be puzzling. A possible reason for this pattern is that the EAL student may be far removed in their understanding of the content of their textbooks and, therefore, a second reading is of little or no benefit. The disillusionment they may feel due to the complexity of their textbooks may serve as a demotivating, rather than motivating factor. Many of the remaining responses received from students were lower-order responses to comprehension difficulty²⁴. A very small proportion of students reported more sophisticated strategy use²⁵. Of the six students who reported sophisticated strategy use, four were EFL students. Only one EAL student indicated that he would translate the word to his mother-tongue to assist him in understanding. The above distribution of the responses is similar to those obtained by Taraban *et al.* (2000). A notable difference, however, is that the use of repetition strategies (for example, reading the text more than once) was the most dominant strategy.

Figure 6.1 showed that all except one student passed Grade 12 English either as a first or additional language. It is, therefore, of concern that so few of them listed the use of

²⁴ Obtain a different source (11.29%); read aloud (4.83%); take a break or stop reading (4.83%); underline difficult words (1.61%); and use past question papers (1.16%) (c.f. Appendix 15).

²⁵ Make point or summaries (4.83%); use diagrams (1.61%); generate questions about the material (1.61%) and try to rephrase reading material (1.61%) (c.f. Appendix 15).

sophisticated reading strategies. This suggests a possible deficiency in the schooling system, in particular the teaching, learning and assessment of reading in the English language. Apart from the teaching of decoding skills in the early grades, no formal teaching of reading strategies take place and the students then are expected to know how to read. This deficiency in our schooling system may account for the significant difference in performance of the students in the MCQs and sentence construction in the TELP test (see Figure 6.2) where students encountered greater difficulty in “producing” language.

In the interviews students indicated that if it was just a word that was not understood, then they would consult a dictionary, but, if they did not understand a paragraph or passage, then they would ask a friend. When probed further, several of the EAL students indicated that they often had to consult a dictionary, both the Oxford English Dictionary for “English words” and the discipline specific dictionary for discipline specific terminology. However, all students reported some difficulty understanding and remembering the different terminology used in their field. A study conducted by Auerbach and Paxton (1997) found that many ESL students believed that they needed to know all the words in a text in order to understand the text. The authors, therefore, conclude that their students relied heavily on the dictionary and “are unable to transfer productive L1 [native language] strategies or positive feelings about reading, spend long hours laboring over sentence-by-sentence translation, and attribute their difficulties to a lack of English proficiency” (238). While I agree that some of the difficulties that students experience in reading and writing in higher education can be attributed to their limited proficiency in the English language, I argue that the students’ reading ability is also a contributory factor in their reading/writing difficulties²⁶.

The constant over-reliance of the students in this study on the dictionary, without first attempting to use context clues to decipher the meaning of a word or understanding of a phrase or sentence is a result of the traditional approach to the teaching of vocabulary in schools. Educators constantly encourage students to consult a dictionary if they do not

²⁶ In a study conducted by Pretorius (2002), she found that language proficiency and reading ability are related with academic performance improving as reading ability and language proficiency increase. However, Pretorius (2002:179) argues that reading ability is “more robustly associated with academic performance in the sense that students can score quite average marks on the language proficiency test and still fail or be at risk of failing”. She, therefore, concludes that a lack of reading ability functions as a barrier to effective performance.

know the meaning of a word or they provide students with a list of 'difficult' words and their meanings which students have to memorize. Both approaches are very limiting²⁷.

Of the twelve participants in this study only one student said that if her friends were not able to help her in understanding a text, then she would approach her lecturer. The other students merely stated that they would either forget about it or move on to the next section. When asked why they did not approach their lecturers for help, some students responded with "she is cheeky", "they get cross", and "I'm afraid to" while others responded with an uneasy smile. The responses received from students could be explained in many ways. A possible explanation is that the lecturers were unapproachable or the students were not motivated enough to approach their lecturer. Either way the inability or reluctance to approach academics for assistance has a deleterious effect on students' learning as it means that the lecturers often are unaware of the students' level of difficulty. The seeming lack of participation or initiative by students in class is usually associated by the lecturers with a lack of interest or lack of intelligence. According to Ballard and Clanchy (1988:13) "Academics who complain of students' general 'illiteracy' are sometimes reminded, disturbingly, that other cultures of literacy exist...few seem to recognize the problem for what it is, an unsteady transition between cultures". In a recent study conducted by McKenna (2004:208) at the DUT, students explained their lack of participation in a number of ways:

In some cases the lecture format was not seen as conducive to interaction, 'normally lecturers lecture', 'They do the talking and you just listen', 'you're listening and like underlining important stuff from the text'. Fear of saying the wrong thing was also a common explanation: 'I think it is, ja, they are afraid to ask if they don't understand, especially Africans, I mean we as blacks sometimes we feel inferior.' 'The big problem obviously is when you want to express yourself and you're scared, maybe the people will hear if your English is good, because even in high school you want to say something but you are scared so it is up to you to say whether I'm wrong or right I have to ask this question. You frame the question and you make sure that it is correct'.

Hence, the lack of class participation could be explained in terms of proficiency in the L2, as well as students' cultural upbringing. Many students at DUT lack proficiency in the English language and do not speak in class simply because they are afraid their

²⁷ Wallace (1982) points out that too much referral to a dictionary has a negative effect on interest in reading as well as comprehension. Moreover, Mason and Au (1990) argue that simply learning the definition of a word in isolation of the context within which it is used, is not beneficial since often words may have different meanings in different contexts (*c.f.* Chapter 4).

meaning could not be heard as they intended it²⁸. While students are in the situation of grappling with L2 acquisition, they simultaneously have to cope with learning the elevated literacy practices of their discipline. This becomes an enormous struggle for the students. Further, in some cultural contexts children are not encouraged to ask questions²⁹. Therefore, questioning a lecturer is considered rude as it is seen as questioning the lecturer's teaching abilities or authority. De Kadt (1994:57) in her study on the speaking patterns of the traditional Zulu society argues that these speech norms "could have serious consequences for classroom instruction".

A lack of resources in the home environment was also pointed out as a contributory factor to the difficulties experienced in reading. For example:

- Sharita: Do you find them (discipline related texts) easy or difficult to read?
 Sibongile: Sometimes, like when I'm at home I find it difficult because there are words that I don't understand but if I'm in the library there are other references to use.
- (Interview 1: 28/04/04)

Interestingly, very similar responses to the above were obtained by Kaur and Thiagarajah (1999) in their study of reading habits of students enrolled for the Bachelor of Arts in English and Literature studies (ELLS) programme at the School of Humanities, University Science Malaysia. During interviews they found that many of the students read very little, except for some who read the daily newspaper. Their students seemed very uncomfortable when asked about their reading interests and cited the lack of time and access to reading materials as reasons for not reading. The limited reading undertaken by students in my study raises questions on their use and knowledge of reading strategies. This is explored in the next section.

6.4.7 Student use and knowledge of reading strategies

Researchers (Pressley *et al.* 1995; Taraban *et al.* 2000) have shown that strategic readers make use of reading strategies and are successful academically. The

²⁸ Hall *et al.* (1995) found that Black students did not ask lecturers for help because they were afraid of being labelled 'problem black students' or of receiving patronising remarks from their lecturers. Hall *et al.* (1995) found that participation in class correlated strongly with students' performance.

²⁹ In a study conducted by Heath (1982b:104) in two communities in South-Eastern United States, she found that Trackton children "are not regarded as information givers or as appropriate conversational partners for adults". In her study she observed that educators generally asked questions that were out of context.

importance of reading strategy interventions has also been stressed in the literature review (*c.f.* Chapter 3) where it was pointed out that the use of reading strategies improves one's ability in reading. The students' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies were obtained through a survey of reading strategies (*c.f.* Chapter 5), the results of which are discussed below.

Section C of the Student Questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 2) was a survey of reading strategies. Students were given thirty³⁰ statements. Each statement had a rating of 1 to 5 with "1" being 'I never do this' to "5" being 'I always do this'. They were required to circle the number that was appropriate to them, thereby indicating the frequency with which they use the listed reading strategy. As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.8, this data was analysed according to the scoring guidelines provided by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), where an average score of 3.5 or higher, between 2.5 to 3.5, and from 2.4 or lower, indicated high, medium or low awareness of reading strategies, respectively (please see Appendix 11). The total average scores for the sixty-two participants were as follows: global reading strategy 3.41; problem solving strategy 3.7 and support reading strategies 3.42. According to the interpretation guidelines, problem solving strategies have a high score, indicating that students believe they use these strategies more often when reading academic material. Global and support reading strategies have medium scores indicating medium awareness of these reading strategies. The overall average for the combined groups for all students was 3.51, which is the borderline between high and medium awareness of reading strategies.

In an earlier study, Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) found that low ability readers reported a lower level of awareness and strategy use when reading academic materials than high ability readers. Similar comparisons could not be made with the twelve students that were interviewed as there was no correlation between students' TELP test scores³¹ and level of awareness and strategy use as measured by the scoring guidelines provided by Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001). Of the three students who failed the test, two received a 'high' overall average awareness score and one a 'medium' overall average awareness score of reading strategies.

³⁰ It must be noted that the last two statements related specifically to EAL students reading experiences and EFL students were asked to ignore these two statements as these were not applicable to them.

³¹ Students wrote a language proficiency test (TELP) at the beginning of the 2004 academic year.

The fact that students reported high awareness and use of problem solving strategies could suggest that students experience more difficulty with these strategies and, therefore, need to use them more often. Furthermore, since many of them are still performing poorly, it could be an indication that although they are using reading strategies, they are not using them correctly or are not getting maximum benefit from the way they are using them. Hence, the need for the teaching of reading strategies.

In the interviews, questions concerning the use of reading strategies were also asked of the students. In this way, I attempted to cross-reference information gathered in the interviews with that obtained from the questionnaire. Students were asked, "What are some of the reading strategies you use when you experience difficulty in reading something?" Surprisingly, all twelve students indicated that they did not know what reading strategies were. One student (Thembe) who attempted to answer this question, before receiving an explanation from myself, clearly confused a reading strategy with study skills for she responded by saying "I'm thinking how you do your study, taking up all your work and dividing it in times and how long you take to read that" (Interview 1: 30/04/04). She recalls mind maps being taught at school and says "...the rest I discovered myself" (Interview 1: 30/04/04). Thembe's response highlights the fact that very little teaching of reading occurs in school. It also could suggest that reading is not taught in a contextualized way as a means of interpreting the world, but rather as a skill. After an explanation to students that reading strategies were techniques that they used to help them understand the text better, half the students indicated that they would consult a dictionary if it was a word that they did not understand. Of this group, two of the students said that they might also seek assistance. Only one EAL student and all three of the EFL students reported that they generally do not experience difficulty when reading. However, two of the EAL students indicated that if they did experience difficulty then they would read the text more than once in order to make sense of it. Of the twelve students, only one student (Sibongile) reported that she would read aloud "like I talk" as this helps her to clear her thoughts. The above responses indicate that the concept of reading strategies is not clearly understood by majority of the students. This problem seems also to stem from the lack of attention paid to reading in our educational system. Students are just not getting the practice they need to develop their reading comprehension. As much is evident by the fact that only two of the twelve students

indicated that they were taught reading strategies in school, namely, skimming, and identifying the main idea. Thus, many of our students do not become constructive responsive readers as defined. For students to succeed in higher education they have to become engaged learners. As a result of the lack of attention paid to reading, an obvious compensatory strategy would be to design instruction where practice in the essential reading strategies are embedded into the curriculum in an interactive and meaningful way. This I attempted to do through an action research intervention, which is described in Chapter 4 and 5. To recapitulate: the students understanding of reading strategies and their definition of reading also was probed in the introductory lesson (Lesson 1) of the action research component of the study. Students were given a writing task whereby they had to write down their definition of reading and their understanding of a reading strategy.

During the interviews when students were asked these questions they were put on the spot and, therefore, gave off the cuff answers. In repeating these questions in the first lesson of the action research component, the intention was to establish if after reflecting on their answers given in the interview, the students' responses had changed. Furthermore, since some students may articulate themselves better in writing than orally, they were required to write down their answers. In addition, repeating the questions served as a way of triangulating data received from the different phases of data collection. These responses are shown in Appendix 13, Table D. From the responses, it can be seen that the concept of reading strategies is still not understood by the majority of students:

Lunga: I think, is first concentrate on what you are reading and stay in a quite place and be relaxed as much as you can so that the information you find in that source gets into your head.

(c.f. Appendix 13, Table D)

A few of the students associated a reading strategy with the difficulty of understanding a word(s) in a sentence and would, therefore, consult a dictionary. For example, Melanie said: "The ways I believe to improve reading and understanding. It starts from the easy books working your way up to the difficult ones, with a dictionary next to you to understand new words that one comes across." (c.f. Appendix 13, Table D).

These findings confirm the responses obtained in the interviews and which are presented earlier in this chapter where it was found that the majority of students were not taught reading strategies in school. However, it must be noted that in the course of the interviews an explanation of reading strategies were given to students. An understanding of the concept is not reflected in the students' written responses, which was obtained approximately three weeks after the interviews. Furthermore, during the collection of baseline data that was undertaken before the interviews, a survey of reading strategies (SORS) was conducted (Appendix 2, Section C), the findings of which were presented earlier. Students were requested to indicate the frequency of use of a list of thirty reading strategies, ranked from "never" to "always". In their responses all students indicated familiarity and use of most of the reading strategies (*c.f.* discussion earlier on in this section). A comparison of this result with the students' responses in the ethnographic interviews and action research component indicates an apparent contradiction. Three possible explanations for this pattern were presented. First, the students are participating in each component of the overall study in isolation of each other. They are not applying what they have learnt in one situation to the next. This may be attributed possibly to the fact that in our schooling system, both at primary and secondary levels, the various subjects are taught in isolation of each other. For example, during a Biology lesson no links would be made to what the student is learning in Physics or Mathematics or to language aspects. Generally, subject specialists are assigned to teach their subject and they see their subject as independent from the others. Hence, students are not taught and encouraged to make links between the different subject materials. This pattern is often reinforced at tertiary level. Second, while the students in practice do use reading strategies as per their responses from the questionnaire, they perceive the term reading strategies as an abstract concept and, therefore, not easy to assimilate. Therefore, due to their limited understanding of the concept, the use of reading strategies to improve reading comprehension is not an activity in which the students will automatically engage. Third, there is a possible weakness in the questionnaire itself, namely the problem of reactivity. All the statements in the Mokhtari and Sheorey questionnaire are 'positive' statements, with ordinally ordered ranking responses. The statements may bias participants to respond in a particular way in the strategy questionnaire because the students may soon grasp the notion that these statements reflect valued or desirable actions or responses to a text. This type of sequence (all statements in a positive direction) can also lead to

acquiescence responding, where respondents answer favourably no matter what the question is.

To complete the discussion of the students' overall understanding of reading, the next section provides a discussion of the students' definitions of reading as obtained from various instruments used for the research.

6.4.8 Definitions of reading

An important issue relevant to a study of this nature is to evaluate how the students' past learning and experiences have helped to shape their understanding of the definition of reading. Generally students defined reading in terms of its purposes and usefulness. Although the range of responses in terms of a definition varied, there were some similarities. For example, Shikaar was able to identify that "...you do a lot of reading for a lot of different purposes – you sometimes read for the fun of it. Sometimes you read because you have a purpose, you know like a subject" (Interview 1: 14/04/04). On the other hand, Lunga felt that "...I don't think its reading just for fun – if you not going to get anything. Reading is something useful which has useful information especially to you" (Interview 1: 28/04/04). Pumlan's responses tended to agree with Lunga when he said that "reading is all about when a person really wants to know something because you can't really read something that don't have interest in you" (Interview 1: 28/04/04). The most common responses were that reading is all about 'getting' knowledge and information. A few students also said that reading involves understanding. This interpretation is consistent with the definition of reading provided by Richards *et al.* (1992:306) who state that reading is "perceiving a written text to understand its content". In analysing the response received from Edna it would seem that she is able to recognize that people may understand text differently when she says "...its all about how you go through the actuality of reading and how **you** understand it" (Interview 1: 30/04/04). This understanding of the definition of reading appears to be consistent with that of Pearson and Stephens (1994:35), who define reading as a "complex, orchestrated, constructive process through which individuals make meaning. Reading, so defined, is acknowledged as linguistic, cognitive, social, and political".

Slightly different responses were received from Thembe and Yasteel who placed emphasis on the important benefits of reading. For example, Thembe said that "...if you

read everyday it makes you stronger, you know what you are talking about and you can be confident about it – it gives you power” (Interview 1: 30/04/04) and Yasteel said “.....its protective in a way in that you read somebody else’s lifestyle and how they went through stuff that you are going through now – it helps prevent yourself going through the whole thing they went through” (Interview 1: 30/04/04). Melanie was the only student who spoke of words as symbols, when she said

...It’s words that you have learnt from very young so its more like symbols going into your brain which it recognizes and it makes you understand the words and meaningsit projects knowledge to your brain or improves your brain cells so it’s just written material that you see with your eyes and it goes into your mind.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

Melanie’s definition points to the fact that the words that one learns from a young age are stored in the brain and as one reads one is able to make a connection with the already stored words. As such it could be argued that she has a limited understanding of reading since reading goes beyond a mere recollection of words. Reading involves the reader’s prior experiences, personal schemata, and early literacy practices. For it is the reader who reads, understands and responds to the text (Ruddell and Ruddell 1994). Melanie’s definition is in keeping with the autonomous model of literacy where meaning is seen as residing in the text autonomous of the cultural context in which it is produced and interpreted. The same applies to the cognitive skills the reader uses to decode a text. In NLS, reading is seen as a social process that involves interaction with, amongst others, society, culture, schooling and history.

The students’ definition of reading was also probed in the introductory lesson (Lesson 1) of the action research component of the study. As already explained above (in the discussion on understanding of reading strategy) students were given a writing task whereby they had to write down their definition of reading. A comparison of the students’ responses to the definition of reading in the ethnographic interviews (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table C) and the action research component (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table D) shows that they are remarkably consistent. In both cases all the students (but one) gave the same definitions using slightly different wording. The one exception was Sibongile, who provided an expanded definition in her written response as illustrated below.

Sibongile: (oral response): Reading is just for getting knowledge.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

(written response): Reading is taking a newspaper, magazine or any book and reading over. One may read for finding or getting information or one may read for fun or one may read if their bored just trying to keep themselves busy. But for reading is all about gathering information, whether the information is about what's going on in the world or the information is about my course subject. All in all I think reading is about gaining knowledge.

(c.f. Appendix 13, Table C/D)

From the findings it is not possible to establish if students communicate better orally or in written form.

6.5 Conclusion

The students' attitudes to reading and reading practices have been presented in this chapter to show that not sufficient emphasis is placed on reading in schools as well as in higher education, thereby having an adverse effect on student reading habits and motivation to read. In general, the students engage in very little reading outside of the academic material relevant to their studies – this primarily for completing assignments. Heavy reliance is placed on the lecture notes given by the lecturers. Reading for pleasure is an alien concept, let alone practice. Furthermore, the students appear to lack intrinsic motivation for reading. Although the students have a reasonable understanding of the definition of reading, their knowledge and use of reading strategies in addressing difficulties in reading is restricted to the 'basics' with a heavy reliance on the use of the dictionary. From responses to the questionnaires and in interviews there is a dearth of knowledge of sophisticated reading techniques among all twelve participants. Several contributory factors may be responsible for this behavioural pattern. The majority of the students come from poor or low-income households in which reading material was scarce and where there is a lack of parental involvement in the education of the students. Reading was not encouraged in the home, due to one or several factors: the majority of parents do not have a post-matriculation qualification; families lack funds to purchase books and magazines; or the families were embedded in culturally oral traditions where story telling is more prominent than reading.

Within the schooling environment, the EFL students were exposed to reading prior to starting school. On the other hand, the EAL students were introduced to reading only on entering school and not necessarily in Grade 1. While all students were taught to read in primary school, the data suggests that this stopped either in Grade 3 or 4. In addition to

this, the methods used are questionable in their ability to promote enthusiasm for reading. Students' responses indicate that reading was not taught in secondary school. This deficit is compounded by the finding that at tertiary level, the lecturers did not encourage any reading after a particular section was lectured. Therefore, for most of their educational careers the students were left 'to fend for themselves' in grappling with reading. The irony is that even with the introduction of collaborative learning strategies the value and place of reading has been neglected, and yet the efficacy of such strategies is dependent on a sharing of knowledge that has been internalised, that is 'read' and understood.

It is interesting to note that the majority of students in the study passed English, either as a primary or additional language, comfortably at the matriculation level. However, their performance in the TELP language proficiency test indicated shortcomings in their ability to 'produce' language through sentence construction. A glaring absence in the responses of the students was any mention of 'writing'. In other words, reading was taught as an isolated activity without any connection to writing. Therefore, the next chapter explores students' attitudes and practices towards writing and any connection to reading.

CHAPTER 7: STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS WRITING AND THEIR WRITING PRACTICES: FROM CHILDHOOD TO BEYOND

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6 I explored the students' attitudes and practices towards reading in order to better understand students' reading and writing behaviours and patterns. I have argued that since reading and writing are complementary processes that should not be isolated from each other, it is, therefore, important in any reading intervention to include writing tasks and *vice versa*. In fact, because of the relationship between reading and writing, researchers advocate integrated reading/writing activities. Thus, while this research focuses on developing the students' reading comprehension, this is done together with a focus on students' performance in various integrated writing tasks. Hence, in addition to developing a student profile on reading, an understanding of the students' early experiences of writing, as well as their attitudes towards and practices of writing also are important. Developing a student profile of writing provides an indication of the role, if any, that writing plays in conjunction to reading, throughout the scholarly development of the student.

In the first section of this chapter the students' family attitudes towards and practices of writing are ascertained. The second section describes the students' background and knowledge of writing by focusing on the students' childhood memories of writing, their school experiences of writing, their perspective of writing and the writing difficulties experienced. The third section provides a discussion of writing from the lecturers' perspective. Finally, in the last section the conclusions to this chapter are presented, arguing that lecturers need to make the writing norms and conventions of their discipline explicit. Further, the link between reading and writing, which often is ignored, also needs to be made explicit.

7.2 Family attitudes towards and practices of writing

In investigating the students' family attitudes towards and practices of writing it was found that most of the students' parents are able to read and write to some extent, except the parents of Andiswa who have no schooling. The parents who are professionals write only because their work requires them to do so, for example, keeping of accounts, appointment diaries, writing memorandums and lesson preparations.

However, this occurs mostly at work. Occasionally parents brought home some writing required for work. Yasteel (an EFL student) reported that her mother sometimes takes down recipes that are given over the radio and also enters crossword competitions. This is not a practice that is common with the parents of the EAL students. The remaining students stated that there was no need for their parents to do any writing, therefore they do not write. Furthermore, while some of the EFL students indicated that their parents would write them absentee notes, the majority of the EAL students indicated that their parents were not in a position to do this because of their limited proficiency in the English language. In Chapter 6 I pointed out that the participants in the study come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, there is minimal or no parental involvement in the students' education. Bernstein (1971) looked at the relationship between class and language and showed that children from working classes had access to less reading material and language and, therefore, used language in a more limited way. The work by Heath (1983) supports Bernstein's (1971) point. The negative effects that the above factors may have on the students' academic success were also discussed in Chapter 6. The negative effects are reinforced by Cooper (1986:313) who says that the individual's background as well as their language abilities have an influence on their writing. Students who do not have sufficient background on a topic and are not able to relate the topic to their oral language most likely will be unable to write about it.

All students except one indicated that their siblings only wrote when required to do so for educational purposes. The exception was Patrick's sister. He reported that his sister is always writing, for example, "if she wants to analyse something she writes it down..." (Interview 2: 28/04/04). The importance of writing is discussed in the literature review (Chapter 3) where it is pointed out that writing helps students to clarify understanding and organise their thoughts (Fitzgerald, 1989; Wells 1993). In other words, it becomes a way of monitoring our own mental activity. Therefore, in the next section the writing experiences of the students are examined and, in particular, whether reading and writing were taught in an integrated manner as well as if students were encouraged to use reading to enhance their writing and *vice versa*.

7.3 Students' background and knowledge of writing

Over the years researchers (Loban 1963; Tierney and Leys 1984; Cooper 1986; Cobine 1995) have stressed the importance of correlating reading and writing instruction. Yet,

educators are not given directions on how to correlate reading and writing activities. Many educators still use the traditional audiolingual approach¹ where students are given a comprehension passage and questions are set based on the passage. This practice, for many educators, is seen as correlating reading and writing. Since the link between reading and writing is not emphasized either by parents or educators, students themselves fail to see writing as an important learning tool. The argument presented in this section problematises the link (or its absence) being made between reading and writing by parents, educators and the students themselves and suggests what implications these might have for the further development of students' writing and reading strategies. The students' childhood memories of writing are discussed first.

7.3.1 *Childhood memories of writing*

All three of the EFL students (Yasteel, Dhiren, and Shikaar) have some memory of being taught to write by either one of their parents. They recall being taught the different letters of the alphabet and then simple words². On the other hand, only three of the nine EAL students reported that they were taught some writing prior to school. One of them was Edna, who stated:

....I remember she (mum) used to have this board and say this is "a" – you know, the letters of the alphabet,but she didn't know much English. She mostly taught me in my language.

(Interview 3: 29/08/04)

Edna's parents had a small chalkboard at home. Her mother used to write the letters of the alphabet and she used to copy them down and she would continue copying the letters until she was tired. However, she stated that these writing lessons did not happen very often. Melanie had similar experiences of writing.

Melanie: My mum would make me sit down on a table and make me write pages everyday – not for punishment just to improve my handwriting.

Sharita: Was it just the letters of the alphabet?

Melanie: No, actual words and sentences.

¹ The audiolingual approach emphasises the teaching of speaking and listening before reading and writing; uses dialogues and drills; discourages use of the mother tongue in the classroom; and often makes use of contrastive analysis. According to Richards *et al.* (1992:26) the theory behind the audiolingual method is the "aural-oral approach to language teaching, which contains the following beliefs about language and language learning: (a) speaking and listening are the most basic language skills, (b) each language has its own unique structure and rule system, and (c) a language is learned through forming habits".

² This information was obtained from the second interview with students.

- Sharita: Was this in Greek?
 Melanie: Yes, in Greek and maybe sometimes in English when my brother helps and say "now write this". My brother and I were brought up writing pages everyday when we were young. Sometimes about six pages a day or sometimes three.
- Sharita: Was it the same words over and over?
 Melanie: Ya, at the beginning it was like that, it used to be one word, then a few sentences and later on it would be a whole story.
 (Interview 3: 29/08/04)

It seems that Melanie's mother was much more stringent than Edna's. Melanie recalls her mother writing Greek words and sentences, which she had to copy over and over, sometimes ending up writing about six pages of the same sentences. As her writing improved her mother added more words and sentences to the list. Sometimes her brother would make her do the task in English, but she would write the words without any understanding of them. Melanie stressed that this was not done as punishment, but to help her improve her handwriting. The remaining students reported that they learnt to write for the first time when they entered school. In all the instances above where students were taught some writing, writing was taught as a technical skill. Further, there was no writing in response to reading. Apart from the childhood experiences of writing, the students' school experiences of writing, which is discussed next, must have had a huge impact on their attitude towards writing.

7.3.2 School experiences of writing

The responses received from the students in the interview indicate that the manner in which writing was taught in school was very similar for all students. The students began to write by learning to write the letters of the alphabet, their names, then words and slowly graduated to writing sentences. Some students recall being shown picture cards. These cards consisted of a picture with the related word written below, for example, a picture of a dog would have the word 'dog' written below. Students would identify the picture and then copy the word. As an illustration, Dhiren said

I remember the teacher used to write the letters of the alphabet and we used to copy it from the board – in small letters and capitals. We also wrote words that we copied from picture cards and we used to write big between the two lines.
 (Interview 3: 29/08/04)

Students were grouped depending on their capability to complete the various reading and writing tasks. The students who were taught to write prior to going to school found

writing much easier. It is important to note that many of the EAL students began to learn English for the first time when they entered Grade 1 or only in Grade 3³. Prior to this they communicated in their home language. It also must be noted that although Edna and Melanie recall doing some writing in English, they say that they wrote without understanding and rarely spoke English prior to going to school. Once again, students were taught writing as a discrete skill with a focus on improving handwriting, spelling, and punctuation (*c.f.* Chapter 3). The manner in which writing played a role in helping children internalize the conventions of print was virtually ignored. Perera (1984:272) says that “children’s written language matures as they become more confident readers, since, through reading, they gain access to a new and powerful source of language enrichment”.

In secondary school, students recall during their comprehension lessons, being given passages to read, and they had to answer questions based on these passages. From the responses received from the students as to the types of comprehension questions asked, it would seem that the questions were mainly literal questions. Pretorius (2002:191) argues that literal questions “do not require the processing of text at a deeper level and thus do not help to develop students’ meaning-making skills”. At school students are not provided with adequate training to answer inferential questions although inferencing⁴ is central to reading comprehension.

All the EFL students and some of the EAL students said that they were given mini projects/assignments in Grades 10 to 12. These were either individual or group projects. The projects involved researching information and writing it up in a linear fashion. Students do not recall being taught how to write up the different sections of an assignment, for example, the introduction, conclusion and so forth. Neither do they recall being taken through the process of writing multiple drafts which includes prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and final drafting – steps which are integral to the

³ Edna, Andiswa, Melanie, Lunga, and Patrick began reading and writing in English in Grade 1 while Sibongile and Vilakazi began in Grade 3. Pumlani and Thembi were the only EAL students who were able to read and write in English prior to Grade 1.

⁴ Johnson (1984:7) describes inferencing as the filling in of the ‘missing bits’ of information while Garner (1987:118) refer to it as slot-filling. Cashdan (1979:43) says that inferencing requires that the reader go beyond the printed text and “deploy arguments to make a case”. Nuttall (1982:118) says that inferencing is essential in making sense of what we read, from complex arguments to simple sentences. According to Devine (1989:137) inferences can be seen as ‘educated guesses’. For example, if ‘this’ happened, then ‘that’ must also have happened and if one event occurs, then another will surely follow. The guesses made will depend on the background knowledge of the reader.

writing process. In Chapter 3, the importance of making the writing norms explicit to students, as well as the importance of the process approach to writing was discussed. It is only through the writing of multiple drafts and by providing students with constructive developmental feedback that students are able to improve their writing. Some students did indicate that their teachers told them to write drafts before they write out their final project. However, they were not expected to show evidence of having done this. Researchers, for example, Zamel (1982); Hounsell (1987); Paxton (1995); Quinn (1999) argue that the process of taking students through the writing of multiple drafts together with detailed constructive and developmental feedback can assist students in acquiring the norms peculiar to academic literacy.

Students reported that they often got back their assignments with a mark and no or very little feedback. According to Duke (1991:212), if writing is to be used effectively in a reading programme, there must be a plan of evaluation and feedback for students that promote the development of literacy skills. He suggests that both formative and summative evaluation be built into writing activities in order to provide the necessary evaluative information about performance both during and after the writing process. Summative evaluation can be overtly subjective. In order to overcome this problem and make the assessment more authentic, researchers such as Duke (1991) and Wenzlaff *et al.* (1999), advocate the use of rubrics. In the interviews students indicated that the feedback received usually focused on circling of spelling errors, inserting full stops and commas, and correcting grammar⁵. In addition, they were not given an opportunity to resubmit their mainstream projects. This approach sees literacy as a set of atomised skills which students learn and then can transfer to other contexts, and is akin to the autonomous literacy model defined by Street (1984) (*c.f.* Chapter 2). Feedback to students should be in the form of suggestions and questions that focus on making meaning rather than the correction of surface errors. Writing then, becomes a process consisting of a number of 'to and fro' steps. In addition, Grabe and Kaplan (1996:377) claim that responding to students' writing can greatly influence student attitudes to writing and their motivation for future learning. Therefore, it appears that the students

⁵ According to Perera (1984:271) "the requirement that the first attempt should be a neat finished product is inimical to the full exploitation of the cognitive and expressive resources of the written language. It is important, therefore, that pupils should not think of revising as a process of correcting mistakes but rather as a way of searching for the best expression of their developing meaning".

have been taught writing through a superficial process. The influence, if any, that this has on their perspective of writing at tertiary level is focused on next.

7.3.3 Students' perspectives on writing

In the questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 2), the students' responses varied when asked if they enjoyed writing. Of the twelve participants in the study, three gave unqualified positive responses. A total of three students indicated that they only enjoyed informal writing; three students stated that they enjoyed informal writing, but only enjoyed formal writing if they understood the material, while three students stated that they do not enjoy writing at all. Some of the reasons given by students for not enjoying discipline specific writing include:

Andiswa: Because I now that my English is not good and I am not good in English spell that why I am not like to writt.
(QS2, 9b)

Pumlani: I don't like relying on fixed strategies to do my work.
(QS3, 9b)

Andiswa was one of the weakest (reader and writer) in the class. She had great difficulty in expressing herself verbally in English and thus she spoke rarely. On the few occasions that she did speak, it was to answer questions directed at her. I often tried to include her in conversations by saying “..and Andiswa, what do you think about this?” but she would not respond. Andiswa also experienced great difficulty in writing as can be seen from her response when asked if she experienced any difficulties when writing her assignments. She replied “It is difficulty to the essay for me and if I am writing test it is difficulty because of the spell. I can no what is ask but I will writt as I am talking so that is why it is difficult for me” (QS2, 10i). It must be noted that Andiswa failed Grade 12 English and obtained a score of 16/100 in the TELP pre-test. The 16 marks were obtained for the MCQs, meaning she had a 0 score for the sentence construction tasks.

Pumlani's response echoes a problem that most students experience with academic writing, that is, the formal nature of academic writing, as is shown below from the responses received from the other students (excluding the twelve) who filled in the questionnaire.

- EAL 5: Sometimes I find it difficult to prepare for my test and assignment at the same time. I do not like much work;
- EAL 10: I think its because I have to be accurate, have to follow rules for example for referencing;
- EAL 11: I think they are difficult. I find it hard to find information;
- EAL 13: I hate writing assignments because I have to write the assignment in my own words and if I have to copy it out I have to reference it, I think that's too much for me;
- EAL 19: Cause assignments are too formal and need time; and
- EFL 21: Extremely boring and I don't feel enthusiastic about it – Don't feel motivated.

The above responses suggest that students tend to experience difficulty particularly in researching information and structuring the assignment in terms of the required linear format, thus indicating that they are not familiar with the literacy norms and conventions of their discipline. In order to succeed in their studies students need to conform to the 'rules and conventions'. Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8) believe that "they [the 'rules and conventions'] are nowhere codified or written down, and yet they mediate crucially between the student's own knowledge and intentions, and the knowledge and potential meanings that exist within the university". They argue that the cultural understanding of the institution and discipline need to be made explicit to students as it will benefit them. The cultural understandings refer not only to textual conventions, but also what counts as knowledge and how knowledge is constructed within the institution itself and the discipline (Boughey 1994). As stated earlier, I found that many lecturers at DUT tend to focus only on their discipline content and not on the rhetorical processes. They feel that their responsibility is to teach the former, thereafter the latter will develop automatically. Geisler (1994:211) says " ..domain content – is not a set of facts simply 'found' by the discipline...but socially constructed by the discipline's members and intimately related to the rhetorical processes underlying the reading and writing of texts".

The responses of the students in the interviews also indicate that some of the students do not appear to be motivated enough to engage in additional independent work. This could stem from their secondary school experiences where they may not have been required to engage in projects outside normal school hours. A national study undertaken by the Department of Education in 2005 revealed a seemingly widespread lack of a culture of homework in many schools (Department of Education, 2005). Given that students enter tertiary institutions from diverse schooling backgrounds, it is, therefore, crucial to understand the experiences that the students bring with them into higher

education. In Chapter 6 I showed that many of the participants in the study come from schools that are not well-resourced (in particular, no school/municipal library and lack of text books) and from homes where there was not much exposure to reading material. Therefore, they were not encouraged to read either in or out of school. Educators merely provided the students with notes which they had to reproduce during tests and examinations. Writing was generally restricted to the copying of notes and was not used as a tool to develop understanding. Hence, at tertiary level, the sudden exposure to a vast amount of print and projects/assignments in many disciplines results in the students feeling overwhelmed and bewildered. Their indecisiveness (which stems mainly from not knowing what to do and how to do it) could make them seem unmotivated and disinterested. Furthermore, it could be the uncertainties and lack of confidence students experience that actually demotivate them. Thus, there is a need to make the reading and writing literacy practices in the different disciplines explicit for students. As Cope and Kalantzis (1993:8) argue, “for those outside the discourses and cultures of certain realms of power and access, acquiring these discourses requires explicit explanation....Students from historically marginalised groups, however, need explicit teaching more than students who seem destined for a comfortable ride into genres and cultures of power”.

A significant majority of the students (75%) indicated that they were required to do a fair amount of writing in their discipline, which involved note taking in the classroom and completing assignments. A total of six students found assignment writing easy, four found the task difficult and two students sometimes experienced difficulty⁶. Some responses from students were:

Thembie: Yeah, they expect you to use words and your brain doesn't have the information then you go to the dictionary and look up the words or ask people.

(Interview 1: 30/04/04)

Pete: Yes, at times I do because there are some terms that actually in dental technology we have a dental technology language that when writing you should include things that are done in dental technology and it tends to be more difficult for you to memorize the words you have to use in certain topics. So the difficulty comes when using language terms because we have so many

⁶ The students who found assignment writing easy were: Sibongile, Yachna, Shikaar, Diren, Melanie, and Lunga. On the other hand, Vilakazi, Edna, Andiswa and Thembie reported that they found assignment writing difficult, while Patrick and Pumlanani said that they sometimes experienced difficulty.

terms we use as dental technicians – that's the problem I have – using the terms the way they want us to use them.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

It is interesting to note that all three EFL students found assignment writing easy. However, one of the EFL students (Yasteel) was puzzled by the fact that although she did not experience difficulty in writing assignments, she obtained low marks, as can be seen from the following statement.

Yasteel: When writing assignments I don't experience difficulty. I think I do quite well in that but when the assignment comes back to me I am confused as to why my marks are so low. I don't understand why the marks are so low. All the information is there yet the marks are low.

(Interview 1:30/04/04)

Yasteel's comments show that the requirements of the writing tasks are not made explicit enough. This may be so because many of the 'rules and conventions' of the discipline are seen as 'common sense' knowledge by the lecturers. McKenna (2004:167) argues that because of the subconscious nature of literacies, such as academic literacy, most academics will encounter difficulty in articulating how language functions to establish the norms of their discipline. Although lecturers maybe aware that the type of reading, writing and other behaviours expected in higher education involves more than technical language proficiency, they may not necessarily be able to assist their students in acquiring these norms. What may appear to be common sense to the lecturer may present a challenge to the student, as they are not able to express how the literacy practices expected of them are strange and difficult to access. One way of making the writing norm explicit for students is to provide students with clear guidelines on the expectations of the lecturer and this can be done through a rubric (*c.f.* Chapter 3). A rubric is "a scaled set of criteria that clearly defines for the student and teacher what a range of acceptable performance looks like" (Pate *et al.* 1993 cited in Wenzlaff *et al.* 1999:4). Rubrics assist in making lecturers' expectations clear as well as providing guidelines for students on how to meet these expectations. Thus, a well-constructed rubric can serve as a tool for students to monitor, self-assess and improve their performance. This process enhances the students' sense of responsibility for their own work. Wong-Fillmore (1985) refers to this strategy as 'scaffolding'. In other words, the educator will make clear the facets and structural implications of a task by way of

providing supporting questions or guidelines to enable the student to meet the requirements adequately.

When the students were asked if their lecturers provided them with writing guidelines for their assignments, the students were divided in their responses⁷. As an illustration:

Thembie: They do, they tell you if you use text how to reference it.
 Sharita: What about other aspects of writing?
 Thembie: They tell you the basic stuff and the rest is how you make it interesting.

(Interview 1: 30/04/04)

Lunga: Not at all. You see we have this learner guide so the lecturers just refer us to the learner guide. Ya, but in the learner guide there is everything.

(Interview 1: 28/04/04)

The learner guide that Lunga mentions was in my possession. Apart from general information on their assignments (it had to be typed, information on font size, line spacing, as so forth) no other guidelines were provided.

A total of eight students stated that their lecturers did not inform them on how their assignments would be assessed, while one said sometimes, and another was not sure⁸. Only two students indicated that they were informed of the assessment criteria. Given the manner in which the students were exposed to writing in the recollections thus far, this begs the question “What are the writing difficulties encountered by students?” These difficulties are discussed in the next section.

7.3.4 Writing difficulties experienced by students

In Question 10 of the questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 2) students had to rate their responses in terms of ‘lots of difficulty’, ‘some difficulty’, ‘very little difficulty’, or ‘no difficulty’ to different aspects of a writing task. The responses received by EAL and EFL students were first separately recorded and analysed (*c.f.* Figures 7.2 and 7.3 in Appendix 12). Although a combined distribution of EAL and EFL responses to Question

⁷ In the interviews, of the twelve students, nine students stated ‘yes’, while three answered in the negative.

⁸ Thembie (Interview 1: 30/04/04) said ‘sometimes’ while Shikaar (Interview 1: 14/04/04) said that he was not sure. Melanie and Andiswa indicated that they were told how their assignments would be assessed (Interview 1: 30/04/04).

10 is presented in this Chapter, significant similarities and differences between the two groups will be pointed out. Please note that this distribution includes my primary participants of twelve students from the Department of Dental Technology as well as the fifty other students from the Faculty of Health Sciences making a total of sixty-two students.

Figure 7.1: Combined distribution of responses to aspects of writing tasks received from EAL and EFL students

	Lots of Difficulty	Some Difficulty	Very little Difficulty	No Difficulty
a. Using appropriate vocabulary.	9.67%	38.70%	33.87%	17.74%
b. Expressing what you want to say clearly.	11.29%	32.25%	38.70%	17.74%
c. Arranging and developing your written work.	9.67%	22.58%	33.87%	33.87%
d. Writing an introduction to your assignment.	6.45%	22.58%	48.38%	22.58%
e. Understanding the assignment/task question.	1.16%	32.25%	33.87%	32.25%
f. Writing a conclusion to your assignment.	17.74%	27.41%	35.48%	19.35%
g. Referencing your sources.	29.03 %	24.19%	29.03%	17.74%
h. Understanding the subject matter.	3.22%	19.35%	43.54%	33.87%

The combined data in the first column of Figure 7.1 shows that the task 'g' *referencing your sources* (29.03%) was the most difficult to perform, followed by 'f' *writing a conclusion to your assignment* (17.74%), then 'b' *expressing what you want to say clearly* (11.29%), which is followed jointly by 'a' *using appropriate vocabulary* (9.67%) and 'c' *arranging and developing your written work* (9.67%). The individual distribution shown in Figures 7.2 and 7.3 (c.f. Appendix 12) shows that for the EAL students *referencing your sources* was listed as presenting the most difficulty followed by *writing a conclusion to your assignment* and *using appropriate vocabulary*. Whereas the EFL students listed *expressing what you say clearly* as presenting the most difficulty. However, in general, the EFL students do not experience 'lots of difficulty' for the tasks in question. This fact can be explained in terms of Bernstein's (1960, 1962) work on language usage. Bernstein makes a distinction between elaborated and restricted codes in language. He distinguishes between the middle classes using elaborated codes of language and the working class using 'restricted codes' while entrapped within their

own socio-economic group. Many of our EAL students come from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (c.f. Chapter 6). Their home and school literacy practices are often not congruent with the literacy practices of the institution and their disciplines. Therefore, these students experience difficulty in coping with the academic norms of reading and writing. The above point in no way suggests that students from middle class backgrounds do not experience any difficulties in higher education. According to Gee (1990) for students who use middle class conventions at home, learning to write academically becomes a process of acquisition rather than formal learning. Such students acquire writing techniques gradually and with relative ease.

The problems that students experience with referencing have been recently made reference to by many researchers (Thesen 1994; Angelil-Carter 1995; Hendricks and Quinn 2000). The students' understanding of how knowledge is constructed in their discipline is the essence of academic literacy. Angelil-Carter (1995:99) argues that "referencing is a fundamental part of the academic discourse...essential to....an understanding of knowledge as constructed, debated and contested". This point is echoed by Hendricks and Quinn (2000:448) who say that being able to integrate one's own ideas with the ideas of others from various sources, is the key to knowledge construction in the writing of academic essays. Many lecturers do not teach their students how to reference as it is seen as something that should have been learnt in school or in academic literacy programmes. In instances where referencing is mentioned, it is usually explained as a way of avoiding plagiarism rather than as a way of giving greater authority to one's statement or as a way of supporting evidence. Hence many students do not see the value of referencing and they include references in their assignments to satisfy their lecturers. Ivanic (1997:330) says

Instead of viewing this [plagiarism] as a crime prompting moral outrage one should, perhaps, view student writers' practices of lifting phrases wholesale from their reading as one of the consequences of their desire to identify with the academic community.....a means by which they can construct the discorsal self which they understand to be required.

In a study conducted by Hendricks and Quinn (2000:455) it was found that after the explicit teaching of referencing in an integrated manner, students were successful in using the technical conventions of referencing. However, students continued to experience "problems understanding the readings and integrating a quote or idea into

their own writing". Hendricks and Quinn (2000:456) believe this is so because "students, at this stage, are novices in terms of their development of academic literacy and their understanding of epistemology". They argue that students could be assisted with reading by the teaching of reading strategies, which is the subject of this study and will be discussed in the next chapter.

The problems that students have in *using appropriate vocabulary* and *expressing what you want to say clearly* could be linked to the finding above by Hendricks and Quinn (2000). Many EAL students have a limited vocabulary therefore they are more likely to experience difficulty in understanding discipline readings as well as integrating the ideas of others with their own. According to Angelil-Carter (1995:30) "gaining authority in academic writing means learning to use the voices of others to develop one's own". The students' inability in expressing themselves clearly could be a direct result of their limited vocabulary. Kilfoil (1998) states that vocabulary size does contribute to academic success and since many students have a limited range of vocabulary they struggle when they are given writing tasks. To quote Kilfoil (1998:36), "Vocabulary is an important factor in understanding what we read or hear on the one hand, and of saying or writing precisely what we mean, on the other". Since writing a conclusion also requires integrating and synthesizing of information presented in the body of an assignment, this could be a reason why students struggle with it.

Many students, especially EAL students, experience 'lots' or 'some difficulty' in expressing themselves. Therefore, in their writing tasks they generally tend to avoid using their own words and resort to plagiarism. A major factor for many students seems to be a lack of confidence in using their own words. They realise that using their own words may result in grammatical errors, or the message may not be conveyed as intended. Plagiarism then becomes an 'easy option'.

Students can increase their vocabulary by reading widely (*c.f.* Chapter 4). In addition, a student's depth and knowledge of words can be enhanced by multiple exposures to words in different contexts. However, given the socio-economic situation of many students (no school/community library, unable to afford textbooks and leisure reading materials) the objective of reading to improve vocabulary becomes difficult to realise.

Furthermore, readers who experience difficulties in reading are reluctant readers even when material is available.

In Column 4 of Figure 7.1 it is seen that the easiest tasks (greater than 30%) to perform were 'c' *arranging and developing your written work*, 'e' *understanding the assignment/task question*, and 'h' *understanding the subject matter*. The dominant tasks (greater than 40%) within the category of "very little difficulty" were 'd' *writing an introduction to your assignment* and 'h' *understanding the subject matter*. However, in the option given to list other difficulties, Patrick responded by saying:

I always have problem with the way the conclusion has to be arranged and more problem comes from lack of information....I have problem of understanding what is needed due to the strong language.

(QS6, 9i)

Patrick attributes his problems to the "strong" English language that lecturers use, possibly in designing their tasks. If he struggles to understand the lecturers' written tasks then he would obviously experience great difficulty not only in understanding the lecturers during lectures, but also text book language. The problems that he experiences became clearly evident in the action research component of the study (*c.f.* Chapter 8) where I found that he needed additional attention in terms of explanations of the different tasks, but he still struggled to keep up with the rest of the students. A serious problem encountered when responding to Patrick's draft assignments were his constant use of 'difficult' words which almost always were used incorrectly. However, constant alerting him to this fact did not seem to make a difference. Furthermore, he was unable to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information required for the assignment. However, Patrick's attempt to use sophisticated vocabulary does suggest a real motivation to engage with the task and the academic discourse requirements that would give his assignments the credibility, authority and integrity so valued by the academy.

Additional problems listed by participants were received from Melanie who said "Sometimes I carry on explaining until I go way out of the subject and in the end I get confused and forget what I really wanted to explain" (QS9, 10i). Although Melanie's use of the English language was much more coherent than Patrick's, she also often experienced difficulty in extracting the relevant information required for an assignment

task. One way in which students can be assisted in helping them in deciphering relevant information from irrelevant information is through the explicit teaching of reading strategies, in particular identifying the main idea and summarizing of information. As indicated earlier, the explicit teaching of reading strategies, including the two mentioned, forms part of this study and is discussed in detail in the next chapter which focuses on the action research project. Thus far the focus has been on writing from the perspective of the student. The next section looks at writing from the perspective of the lecturer, in particular to establish what they perceive as writing difficulties encountered by the students, and how these can be addressed.

7.4 Lecturer perspectives on writing

In a questionnaire handed out to lecturers (*c.f.* Appendix 3), they were asked, among other questions, with what aspects of writing their students experienced difficulty. A wide range of responses was received for this question. They include the following difficulties: grammar; assignment writing, that is, writing simply, paragraph formatting, setting information into logical order; plagiarising; referencing; extracting and evaluating important information; critical writing; summarizing; note making; making comparisons; researching literature; understanding tasks; academic writing and basic English literacy. Additional responses included:

- L14: Students are unable to compile their notes, there is no logic and understanding and too much of plagiarised information. Students have such problems cause there is a clear indication that they lack reading skills, which tend to complicate/compound their writing problems; and
- L19: They don't know how to spell, sentence construction is very weak and I strongly suspect their reading ability is below tertiary standard which affects their comprehension and ultimately their written work.

These responses indicate that these lecturers recognise the importance of the link between reading and writing. Their views support my position that the teaching of reading and writing cannot be done in isolation of each other. Reading and writing are complementary processes where the development of reading enhances writing and *vice versa* (Fillion 1985; Fitzgerald 1989; Kucer and Harste 1991; Strong 1991).

In response to the question "Do you provide students with guidelines on how to write assignments?", almost all lecturers (90%) indicated that students were given some

guidelines on how to write assignments. One lecturer indicated that “students were given assignment outcomes and at tertiary level it is assumed that service departments and schooling have set the understanding of what an assignment should consist of” (L11).

The position emanating from this discourse is that some lecturers hold the view that they expect students to have acquired a certain level of expertise when entering tertiary education. Moreover, if the expertise is lacking, then it is the responsibility of some outside (to the academic department) service department to address the problem (*c.f.* Chapter 1). Development of academic literacy is not seen as an activity to be undertaken by the academic department.

All lecturers except one responded positively to the question “Should the teaching of writing skills in an explicit and focussed manner be integrated into the curriculum?” The dissenting lecturer felt that this “...should be done prior to coming into the programme. Only done in desperation” (L17). While there is a definite need to address the reading and writing problems of students at primary and secondary levels, the reality is that students are coming into higher education unable to cope with the levels of reading and writing that are required. Therefore, mechanisms need to be put into place in an integrated and meaningful way, to assist under-prepared students at tertiary level. Many of the other lecturers indicated that writing was indeed important in their profession and, therefore, it needed to be taught. Three lecturers (L6, L8, and L13) felt that the integration of writing into the curriculum would help students in sentence/paragraph construction, reading the question as well as analysing and answering the question. More specific responses included:

- L2: Writing skills need to be developed constantly especially ESL learners who are forced to learn and write in English;
- L3: ...needs to be taught and be discipline orientated and focus on small groups;
- L9: (Students) Come from schools with no proper skills;
- L11: In the 1st and 2nd years – but service departments would need to be consulted in terms of feasibility;

- L14: Will allow students to adjust to the expectations of tertiary education and if discipline specific enable them to grasp concepts and terms better and faster.

These responses indicate that there is general support for the development of writing and that there are a few lecturers who seem to be aware that writing should be taught in an integrated manner. However, the mention of service departments once again indicates that the activity, that is, the teaching of writing, is seen as an external activity and not as part of the discipline domain. The 'add on' classes should then focus on language structure (and not discipline-specific meaning making). Thereby, it is assumed that students will transfer their newly acquired language skills to the mainstream classroom. This assumption is strongly refuted by research. Research, in particular NLS⁹, clearly reveals that it is through the mainstream curriculum that the students' literacy related difficulties can be addressed. McKenna (2004:97) says "It is only in this context that issues such as the specific expectations of text construction and text meaning, the relationship between reading and writing, and the specific strategies of knowledge construction can be meaningful addressed". Despite the fact that some lecturers may be aware that the students' problems go beyond just being 'language problems', there is, nonetheless, not much evidence of a recognition of the "...need for systemic changes (that is, changes in 'curriculum and structure of degrees and diplomas' as well as 'pedagogy') in HE rather than just peripheral compensatory or 'remedial' measures" (Scott 2001: 4).

From the following two quotations received from lecturers "Students need to understand how a lecturer will mark them in an exam" (L20) and "Students need guidance when doing each step of the assignment" (L1), it would seem that these lecturers are aware of the need to provide students with explicit guidelines and assessment criteria to assist them in coping with writing tasks. However, it must be noted that the questionnaire was filled-in by lecturers from seven different departments in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Only two of these departments provide students with rubrics. These two departments have been working very closely with academic development practitioners for some time. I am not able to say if the two responses given above were received by lecturers from these two departments since they were not required to disclose their names.

⁹ The NLS has been discussed at length in Chapter 2.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter reveals that the importance of the link between reading and writing in the acquisition of academic literacy is not recognized by educators, parents and the students themselves. In short, what emerges is a picture of functional illiteracy where the value of reading is either ignored or attended to in a fragmentary and dysfunctional fashion. In school, writing was taught as a discrete skill, with an emphasis on improving handwriting, spelling, and punctuation. From the data collected it can be established that while the teaching of writing took place at primary school, no direct attention is given to writing or critical reading skills at the secondary school level. At home, the students were exposed to very little writing as their parents either wrote very little or not at all. As a result of the limited exposure to the teaching of writing in order to enhance meaning construction, the students were overwhelmed at tertiary level by the volume of print material, projects and assignments. Consequently, they experience difficulty in researching and structuring their assignments in the formal written form, in selecting relevant information, and expressing their own ideas. This situation is aggravated by the lecturers at tertiary level who despite recognizing the importance of the link between reading and writing, do not make the link explicit. Although many of the lecturers acknowledge that the problems students are experiencing are more than just 'language' problems, they continue using the chalk and talk method while shifting responsibility to 'fix' students problems to 'someone else'. The consequence of too little exposure to the teaching of writing, and the attitude of lecturers, is that the students at tertiary level experience fundamental difficulties in the writing of assignments, for example in referencing of sources, writing a conclusion, use of appropriate vocabulary, and expressing themselves clearly. The students lack confidence in using their own vocabulary in expressing themselves and, therefore, resort to textbook language. Some of the above difficulties that are experienced by students can be addressed through the teaching of reading strategies, together with scaffolded writing tasks. This is implemented in the action research component of the thesis. It must be noted that although scaffolded writing tasks were implemented in the action research component of the thesis, as indicated in Chapter 1 emphasis is not placed on the analysis of the actual writing.

CHAPTER 8: THE READING STRATEGY INTERVENTION

8.1 Introduction

In Chapters 6 and 7 data from the ethnographic interviews that form a key feature of the research concerning students reading and writing worlds and practices was discussed. These interviews focused on the students' reading and writing behaviours, as well as those of their families (*c.f.* Chapters 6 and 7). Several important findings emanated from these interviews, namely, most students come from backgrounds in which there is not much exposure to print; students were not taught reading strategies at school; students were not encouraged to read, and were not reading on a daily basis and generally read only when compelled to; and students experienced great difficulty in the writing of assignments. In addition, reading and writing were taught as discrete skills with no emphasis on the relationship between reading and writing. As a result, students see these as unrelated tasks that have little long term value and which they are forced to carry out in order to pass their examinations. Hence, the ethnographic account (provided in the previous two chapters) makes it clear that a more explicit approach to the teaching of reading strategies is merited if students are to be better equipped for academic reading and writing at tertiary level. This point reinforces the need for an action research intervention designed to teach reading strategies so as to determine how best to assist students in coping with academic texts, thereby improving their reading comprehension levels and enhancing their motivation to read. The findings of the two previous chapters also raise awareness of the challenges to which the students need to respond, and the need to be more sensitive to students' needs during the reading strategy interventions described in the sections to follow.

The action research component of the study involved the teaching of three reading strategies, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, vocabulary knowledge – the use of context clues to guess the meaning of words in the context, and summarization. As indicated in Chapter 5, these reading strategies were identified as being those with which students struggle most often. The action research intervention took place approximately two weeks after the first two ethnographic interviews. The duration of the intervention was a period of six weeks, with a total of twelve lessons (*c.f.* Figure 4.2). Each lesson consisted of two forty-minute periods. Chapter 5 provides evidence through an analysis of the different lessons of how students' knowledge and understanding of

reading strategies were influenced through planned and meaningful classroom activities. The effectiveness of the intervention is analysed through students' reflective pieces, class writing tasks, and field notes from classroom observations. The data analysis indicates how students responded to the teaching of the three reading strategies, which were initially taught independently and then simultaneously.

In Section 8.2 of this chapter, the approaches used with students during the reading strategy training are discussed. The section begins with the introductory lessons (Lessons 1 and 2), which are presented in Section 8.3. The introductory lesson is followed by a discussion of the teaching of the individual reading strategies in Section 8.4. Section 8.5 provides a discussion of the combined strategy instruction and in Section 8.6 the results of the TELP test and the reading strategy post-test are presented. The chapter concludes with reflections on the pedagogical process.

8.2 The approach to reading instruction

Over the past two decades educators and researchers have debated the merits of the different approaches to reading instruction (Duffy *et al.* 1986; Garcia and Pearson 1991; Stahl 1997; Ryder *et al.* 2003). In this research project the approach of Garcia and Pearsons (1991) is adopted. Garcia and Pearson (1991) divide reading instruction into four general approaches: direct instruction (Baumann 1984; Hare and Borchardt 1984), explicit explanation (Hansen and Pearson 1983; Pearson 1985; Duffy *et al.* 1986; Rinehart *et al.* 1986), cognitive apprenticeship (Palincsar and Brown 1984; Brown *et al.* 1989) and whole language (Goodman and Goodman 1979; Goodman 1986; Edelsky 1990; Edelsky *et al.* 1991). This section, by means of a discussion of the similarities and differences between the different approaches mentioned above, elaborates on the approaches used during the implementation of the reading strategy intervention, together with the rationale for using them. To this end I draw from the work of Stahl (1997) who argues for an eclectic approach. Eclecticism does not mean "a little of this and a little of that" (Stahl 1997:25). In the eclectic approach the needs of the student at the different stages of the learning/reading process are analysed and the goals, and how best they can be achieved, are considered. Different goals may need to be achieved at different times in the same classroom, thereby requiring the melding of different approaches.

Although I began with reading strategy instruction using the explicit explanation approach, I am aware that it has been subjected to much criticism, especially by proponents of the whole language approach (Goodman and Goodman 1979; Neuman 1985; Edelsky *et al.* 1991). Whole language proponents believe that instruction should occur while students use language for communication (written or verbal) and in response to their needs. Instruction should not be planned in advance by the educator, rather educators should observe their students as they work through problems in reading and writing and provide assistance whenever necessary. Whole language instruction also emphasises group work, drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) notion that cognitive processes are first developed through social interactions. On the other hand, explicit explanation involves explicit definitions of the target strategy, an explanation of its usefulness, as well as modelling and practicing of the strategy. While explicit explanation instruction focuses on the teaching of single strategies, "they are carefully brought into a larger reading context over the course of instruction" (Stahl 1997:10). In doing so, constructed worksheets may be used. Initially, in the teaching process, the educator is in control, but then gradually releases responsibility to the students. In contrast, in direct explanation it is assumed that once students are taught a reading strategy, they will automatically transfer what they learnt to other reading situations. On the other hand, the cognitive apprenticeship approach differs from direct and explicit explanation because it does not advocate the teaching of single strategies. Rather, reading construction should stress the use of multiple strategies in "real texts for real purposes" (Stahl 1997: 9). In other words, constructed material should not be used. As in the case of the explicit explanation approach, the cognitive apprenticeship approach also transfers responsibility for learning from educator to student, but it differs in that it uses social interaction as mediator, (which is) rooted in a social constructivist view of knowledge. The NLS, which sees reading and writing as social processes (*c.f.* Chapter 2), can be located broadly within the cognitive apprenticeship and whole language approaches. Having briefly discussed the reading instruction approaches that are used in the study I now move on to describe how these were used during the reading strategy intervention process.

Whilst most of the above terms are self-explanatory, modelling and transfer require further explanation. Modelling involves a commentary or explanation by the educator on how an activity might be undertaken, whilst transfer requires students to work

independently on tasks in order to apply what they have learnt. A review of reading research (Duffy *et al.* 1986; Pearson 1985) indicates that students, especially low performers, benefit from explicit reading strategy instruction. Initially, the target reading strategies were taught using the explicit explanation approach, in particular, using scaffolded tasks involving explanation, modelling, practice and transfer¹. It must be noted that the feedback obtained from the lecturers and the ethnographic enquiry (*c.f.* Chapter 6 and 7) reveal that students are not taught reading strategies at school and that many students struggle with reading academic texts. Furthermore, many students are not aware of the existence of reading strategies. In light of this, it was decided that students would benefit from the explicit teaching of the target strategies and this was considered to be the best approach to use initially. Delpit (1988:280) argues that all students need to be taught the explicit and implicit rules of power “as a first step toward a more just society” and knowledge of the ‘rules’ will make acquiring power easier. The goal of the reading strategy interventions was to make students aware of each of the three reading strategies and provide overt instruction on how to use each strategy, thereby improving reading comprehension and motivation to read. Thus, the reading strategies were initially taught individually using the explicit explanation approach. For these lessons specially constructed worksheets were used but they were all discipline based, and focused on content that students needed for the completion of a major assignment (*c.f.* Appendix 5 for assignment topic). The incorporation of practice and transfer exercises allowed for the gradual release of responsibility for the use of the strategy from lecturer (myself) to student.

After all three reading strategies were taught using the explicit explanation approach, there then was a shift to the cognitive apprenticeship approach where students were taught to use the target strategies simultaneously in a reading selection. Once students were taught to use the strategies in an integrated manner, they were then required to summarize the relevant sections of a chapter from a textbook, which was needed for

¹ A similar approach was used by Duke and Pearson (2002) using different terminology. The components of their model were: i) An explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used; ii) Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action; iii) Collaborative use of the strategy in action; iv) Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility; and v) Independent use of the strategy.

their assignments. For this exercise the whole language approach² was used. Students were encouraged, while working through the chapter, to apply their knowledge of the reading strategies that they were taught. During the course of all the lessons, students were required to work individually for some tasks, as well as in pairs or groups for others (please see Figure 8.5 later in this chapter for the structure of the lessons). The individual, pair and group tasks will be elaborated on in later sections during the discussion of each lesson. The pair and group work led to considerable amount of class interaction and provided students with the opportunity to learn from each other. Social interaction is highly valued in the cognitive apprenticeship and whole language approaches. Throughout the teaching process attempts were made to raise the level of students' metacognitive³ awareness, the ultimate goal of which was to enable students to function effectively on their own while working in the mainstream curriculum. The term metacognition involves at least two processes: awareness of the skills, strategies and resources needed to perform a task effectively and the use of self-regulatory mechanisms to ensure the successful completion of the task (Flavell 1976). To this end students were encouraged to ask the questions 'what', 'why', 'when', and 'how' in order to make them aware of their own thought processes as they carried out the different tasks and to use their awareness to regulate what they were doing. Rather than constructing meaning randomly, Baker and Brown (1984) argue that readers use conscious and subconscious actions to derive meaning from the text. The discussion above explains how a combination of instructional approaches are used to achieve the goals of the project intervention. In the presentation to follow more details will be provided on the different reading strategy lessons. The introductory lessons (Lessons 1 and 2) which took place prior to the teaching of the reading strategies are discussed next.

8.3 Introductory lessons prior to the teaching of the target strategies

Before providing an explanation of how Lessons 1 and 2 progressed (see Figure 8.1), it must be borne in mind that although specific outcomes were written for each lesson, I

² As indicated earlier in this chapter, in the whole language approach students work on a task while the educator observes. The educator assists students as they experience problems during the completion of the task.

³ Flavell (1976) defines metacognition as "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them".

did not go into class with a fixed or rigid lesson plan, but with an outline of aspects that were intended to be covered during the lessons. Pearson (1985:185) argue that “it is impossible to prescribe in advance how instructional experiences should be structured or restructured. Teachers must be free to create these responses ‘responsively’”. They go on to say that “effective instruction demands fluid and flexible teacher response to student understandings” (*ibid*). Thus, while the lessons began with planned intentions to nurture and motivate students during the lessons, I also was flexible and adapted lessons to keep pace with the different understandings that students brought to the classroom.

Figure 8.1: Introductory lessons

Lesson	Content
Lesson 1	Definition of reading Understanding of reading strategy Talk on: importance of reading/purposes/genres
Lesson 2	Reading Strategy pre-test

In the introductory lesson (Lesson 1), students were given a writing task whereby they had to write down their definition of reading and their understanding of a reading strategy. The purpose of Lesson 1 was linked directly to the two questions asked in the interviews, namely, what is the definition of reading and the students’ understanding of reading strategies. It also served as a way of triangulating information received from the data reported in the previous chapters. The data received for these two questions have already been analysed and presented in Chapter 6 and will, therefore, not be (re)presented in this chapter. However, the process that students went through in completing this task will be explained. The first task of Lesson 1 is discussed next, that is, students’ definitions of reading.

8.3.1 Definitions of reading

Students (a total of twelve) were given five minutes to answer the following question written on the chalkboard: “How would you define reading?”⁴ Once students answered the question, they were given another five minutes to compare their responses with their seated partner specifically looking for similarities and differences in their responses. The ‘pairs’ were then given another ten minutes to discuss their responses with another

⁴ Since students already answered this question in the interviews, an explanation was given that their written responses were now needed for comparison and discussion in class.

'pair', thereby forming three groups of four participants. Each group was then asked to read out the definition that they selected as the best and also to mention the similarities and differences in their responses. The groups chose their spokespersons. While the groups read out their definitions, key words were written down on the chalkboard. For example, one group defined reading as "...a process or an event where a person sucks on information or knowledge from the particular article". The words 'process' and 'information/knowledge' was then written down (Observation 1:12/05/04). After all three groups presented their definition, using the listed words and others, students were provided with the following 'simple' definition: "Reading is a process through which the reader makes meaning of the text". The intention in doing this task was not to labour on a definition of reading, but to get students involved in actually thinking about reading and what it involves. Hence, including into the definition words such as 'complex', 'orchestrated' and 'constructive process' would only confuse students. I used the words 'makes meaning' from the above definition and asked students: How do readers make meaning? This led to further discussions⁵. The fact that reading involves not only the reader and the text, but also linguistic, cognitive, social and political factors was elaborated on together with the providing of examples for each concept to help students understand. Students were also informed that meaning does not reside inside a text, but readers use their background knowledge and experiences to make sense of what they read.

This opportunity was used to speak about the different purposes of reading and the various genres of text emphasizing that academic reading, especially expository texts, require greater focus and attention. According to Kist (2000: 712-713), in a new literacy classroom students should become critical readers and writers of text, enabled "to detect and handle the inherently ideological discussions of literacy, and the role of literacy in enactments and productions of power" (Lankshear *et al.* 1997:46). Hence, throughout the above discussions there was an attempt to shift students' understanding of reading as 'meaning residing in the text' to one where 'meaning is created by the reader'. Throughout it was stressed that the reader is an active participant in the reading process and the need for students to become engaged readers by questioning, evaluating, and

⁵ Students were alerted to the fact that reading is not a passive process, but involves active processes such as recognition, interpreting, predicting, and recalling (Rose, online).

challenging what they read. The next task attempted to ascertain students' understanding of the concept 'reading strategy'.

8.3.2 Understanding the concept of a 'reading strategy'

Students were required to provide a written response to the following question: What do you understand by a reading strategy? They were given five minutes to complete this task and thereafter read out their answers. The responses received clearly indicated that students did not know what a reading strategy was. These responses were disappointing given that during the ethnographic interviews students were given an explanation of reading strategies. Their inadequate responses might stem from the fact that they were not taught reading strategies throughout their schooling years. The responses also pointed out that a once-off introduction to the concept was not sufficient and stress the need for constant awareness raising of the concept. It is possible that through the teaching of different strategies students may be better able to grasp the concept. An explanation was then given that reading strategies were techniques that a reader uses to help in understanding a text.

This opportunity was used to stress the importance of reading and reading strategies as well as the empowering nature of reading. Students were informed of the following points: strategies help to improve reading comprehension; strategies help to enhance efficiency in reading; and strategies will help them to process the text actively and to monitor their comprehension. Lynch (online, accessed 2004) speaks of the importance of motivating students before the teaching of reading strategies. Villaume and Brabham (2002:673) argue that students who lack personal investment of "passion in transactions with the text" will "compliantly follow the new procedures[and] simply assimilate these new reading 'actions' into their old understandings of, and attitudes towards, reading". By stressing the importance of reading and the manner in which reading strategies will help students, I hoped to motivate students. These points were stressed on a recurring basis to ensure that students were aware of the importance and value of what they were doing. It was also explained to students that over the next few weeks they would be exposed to three reading strategies, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues, and summarizing, but they would first begin with a test which was purely for the gathering of background information and no preparation was required. Students also were informed that they needed to keep a daily record of the material that

they read. They were expected to place this into their portfolios (*c.f.* Chapter 5) under a section entitled reading log/journal⁶.

In the next lesson, Lesson 2, students were given a reading strategy pre-test. The findings of the pre-test will be discussed later in this chapter together with the results of the post-test. From Lesson 3 onwards the different reading strategies were taught. The next section describes the teaching of each target strategy, showing in greater detail how the lessons progressed, the responses of students to the various tasks/activities, and the pedagogical implications thereof.

8.4. Teaching selected reading strategies

This section presents in detail the teaching of each of the three reading strategies, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues to guess the meanings of words, and summarization. However, before providing the details of each lesson, I present an outline of how the lessons evolved⁷. The first stage⁸ in the teaching of each reading strategy began with a writing task (Writing Task 1) in which students were required to answer questions about the target strategy. An example of a writing task is provided in Figure 8.2 below.

Figure 8.2: Example of a writing task

<p>What is the main idea in a paragraph/text? Where is the main idea found?</p>

The purpose of the writing task was to determine the students' levels of prior knowledge⁹ of the target reading strategy which generally falls into the categories 'much', 'some' or

⁶ The students were not too happy with this additional task as they felt their workload was already too much for them.

⁷ It must be noted that although initially I went through the pedagogical process in a somewhat "step-by-step" manner, these steps were largely explicit to be made 'implicit' with time. The "step-by-step" approach allowed for the accommodation of the student's individual pace, and needs. These steps were integrated (that is, used holistically) during the teaching of the simultaneous use of all three reading strategies. In this regard, the process was an ongoing rather than a lock-step procedure. Through the explanation of the cognitive processes underlying the three reading strategies, followed by modelling of the tasks, and then practice by the students under my guidance, students were empowered to independently control and monitor their comprehension processes.

⁸ Each stage consisted of scaffolded tasks that assisted in developing students' understanding and use of the target strategy. Through scaffolded tasks students are able to achieve higher levels of performance (Gibbons 2002).

'little' prior knowledge. In addition, asking students what they already know helps engage them and begins to provide a framework to organise new information (Santa 2000:30). According to Christen and Murphy (1991), one way to find out what prior knowledge exists about a topic is to ask specific or general questions about the topic. Many researchers (Lindsay and Norman 1977; Rumelhart 1980) have pointed out that obtaining prior knowledge is an important step in the learning process and a major factor in comprehension. The writing task was then followed by pair and/or group work as well as student feedback and discussions. The NLS advocates the use of collaborative activities as well as completely individualized ones. Hence, throughout the lessons attempts were made to achieve a balance between the two. As a reflective educator I stressed that all voices in our classroom are important (Willinsky 1990; Delpit 1995) and encouraged the quieter students to engage in discussions. The students' responses (from Writing Task 1) provided information on their knowledge of the target strategy and this information helped in determining how the rest of the lesson should proceed. The exercise also allowed for access into students' awareness of the existence of the target strategy. Following on from these discussions students then proceeded with Stage 2 of the teaching process, which involved an explanation of the target strategy.

In Stage 2 students were given a more formal definition of the target strategy with explanations of why, when, and how the strategy could be used. Several researchers (Garner *et al.* 1984; Schunk and Rice 1987; Duke and Pearson 2002) have found that students' perception of understanding is increased when they are aware of the importance of the strategies in enhancing their reading comprehension performance. Explanatory notes were also included in a worksheet that students were given for each strategy taught (*c.f.* Appendix 8 to 10). Students could then make reference to these notes whenever they needed to. Stage 3 involved the modelling of the target strategy. During the modelling process, with the aid of an example, the 'think aloud' method was used to demonstrate to students how to use the target strategy. An example is provided in Figure 8.3.

⁹ Prior knowledge (the ideas already present in the mind) refers to the sum of an individual's life experiences and includes all the knowledge of the world that the individual has acquired through life. As a result, it is

Figure 8.3: Example of the modelling process

Sentence	Question/Answer/Summary
Most dentists <u>believe</u> that there are <u>few</u> <u>potential HBV carriers</u> <u>in their practice</u>	What do most dentists believe? That there are few potential HBV carriers in their practice. So what if they believe this? Why is this statement important? Usually a belief leads to a certain way of thinking. Let us read on to see what thought follows.
..and hence, there is <u>little chance of infection</u> in their office or indeed in the profession as a whole.	Because dentists believe there are a few potential HBV carriers in their practice they feel that the chances of getting infected in their practice and in their profession are slim. Is this belief true? I don't think so. Let us continue reading and find out.

While thinking aloud, I asked several questions about the text that aided in the comprehension process. The method of self-questioning is a during-reading strategy. Alvermann and Moore (1991:61) state that self-questioning improves students' processing of text and that poor readers benefit most from training in self-questioning. Nuttall (1996:37) describes self-questioning as interrogating the texts and says that modelling the process of interrogating the text aloud can provide a valuable example for students. Many researchers, for example, Collins and Stevens (1982), and Villaume and Brabham (2002) have shown that modelling is one of the most explicit ways to teach reading strategies. However, in addition to modelling, students need to be able to apply the steps modelled¹⁰.

Stage 4 of the teaching process consisted of application exercises (c.f. Worksheet 1, Appendix 8) which allowed students to practice the target strategy using the method that was modelled. During this stage students usually first worked independently and then in pairs. When working in pairs the students compared and discussed their answers. They were also required to discuss the content of the passages and the meanings of difficult words. In this way they were able to assist each other through the learning process. While students were engaged in these activities I acted as facilitator, walking around monitoring their progress, attending to their queries, while at the same time listening to and encouraging their discussions. This time was also used to record observations. The next step, Stage 5, involved the 'transfer' of knowledge.

often referred to as world knowledge (Pittelman and Heimlich 1991:37).

¹⁰ The pedagogical approach to teaching through scaffolded tasks is in keeping with the process approach to teaching and learning. This approach allows for reflection and the revisiting of each stage.

Stage 5 consisted of a number of revision exercises that students were required to either complete as homework or in class. In this stage, students moved from guided practice to more independent and advanced practice. These exercises not only served as additional practice for students, but also to determine the students' level of understanding of the target reading strategy. Once the 'transfer' exercises were complete, I proceeded with the final stage.

In the final stage (Stage 6)¹¹, students were given another writing task (Writing Task 2) which involved the writing of a reflective piece on the particular reading strategy taught. An example is provided in Figure 8.4.

Figure 8.4: Example of a 'reflective piece' question

What did you learn from Lessons 3 and 4?
What did you like/did not like about the lessons?

In their reflective pieces students had to state what new information they learnt from the lesson, as well as what aspects of the lesson they enjoyed/did not enjoy, or any other comments they wished to include. The reflective pieces were usually completed in class. These pieces were very informative (*c.f.* Sections 8.4.1, 8.4.2 and 8.4.3). For example, Patrick indicated in his reflective piece for 'using context clues' that he had difficulty with understanding some of the clues and how to use them. Therefore, during the teaching of the use of combined reading strategies in a text (which will be discussed after a discussion of the individual strategies) greater emphasis was placed on this aspect using examples from the relevant text to illustrate how context clues could be used. Students were familiar with reflective writing, as it was a requirement of their academic literacy portfolio. The reflective pieces comprised the last task for each reading strategy and ended the lesson. Thereafter, in the next lesson, which involved the teaching of another reading strategy, the same procedure as discussed above and as presented diagrammatically in Figure 8.5, was used.

¹¹ It must be noted that the above stages were largely explicit in order to be made "implicit" with time. Making the stages explicit is advantageous as it allows for the educator to take account of students' individual pace, and needs.

Figure 8.5: Structure of lessons on teaching of target reading strategies

Lesson	Target reading strategy	
Lesson 3	Identifying the main idea in a paragraph	
	Step 1: Writing task 1: questions on target reading strategy	Individual task followed by group work.
	Step 2: Explanation	Lecturer/ Class discussions.
	Step 3: Modelling	Lecturer demonstration.
	Step 4: Practice	Class exercises provided on worksheets. Individual/group work.
Lesson 4	Step 5: Transfer (homework)	Individual – homework exercises.
	Step 6: Writing task 2: reflective pieces	Individual – homework/class task.
Lessons 5 and 6	Guessing the meanings of words in context – process as listed in Lessons 3 and 4.	
Lessons 7 and 8	Summarizing - process as listed in Lessons 3 and 4.	

It must be noted that throughout the lessons the students' awareness of other academic literacy practices were raised as and when the need arose, since these practices are integral components of the academic literacy course. Some examples of these practices will be provided later on in the discussion. Each of the three reading strategies, as well as the students' responses to both the writing tasks described in Figure 8.5 and my observations will be presented below. I begin with the first reading strategy taught, which is, identifying the main idea in a paragraph.

8.4.1 Identifying the main idea in a paragraph

The findings from the lecturer questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 3) in the collection of baseline data, showed that the lecturers were in agreement that the teaching of reading should be integrated into the curriculum. One of the reasons given (*c.f.* Chapter 7) was the students' inability to sift out important and relevant information. Clearly, this is linked to being able to identify the main idea in a text. It is important to note that (as discussed in Chapter 4) the instructional terminology for determining importance in a text may differ from one researcher to another and from one instructional programme to another (Williams 1986; Winograd and Bridge 1986). In addition to the term 'main idea', the terms 'gist', 'essence', 'key word', 'thesis', 'topic' and 'determining importance' of a paragraph/text have been used to describe the key point. Taking cognisance of the fact that the students have come from a schooling environment in which the educators use the term 'main idea', I decided to begin the process by exploring for the main idea in a

text. However, this approach was not rigidly applied. In addition to the term ‘main idea’, at times students were directed to look for the ‘essence’ or to determine the importance of the text. In several instances, for example, in the study of expository texts, it is more feasible for the student to provide the essence of a paragraph than to identify a sentence or sentences as the main idea.

The opinions of the lecturers in the questionnaire (*c.f.* Appendix 3) are consistent with research within the South African context (Blacqui re 1989; Perkins 1991; Pretorius 2000), which has shown that many South African tertiary level students experience problems comprehending texts. Some of the problems are attributed to the students’ inability to identify the main idea in a paragraph, especially when it is not provided in the first sentence. Hence, students need explicit instructions on how to identify the main idea in a text. It must be noted that while teaching the ‘main idea’ was carried out previously at DUT in our ADP type courses, this was done using generic materials. Further, it was taught as a discreet skill with the assumption that students would be able to transfer what they learnt to their mainstream curriculum. The intervention in this thesis is a departure from the conventional approach in that as indicated previously (*c.f.* Chapters 1 and 5), discipline-specific materials are used in an integrated manner. Further, attention is also given to raising students’ metacognitive awareness.

At the beginning of Lesson 3, students were informed that the focus of the lesson would be on identifying the main idea in a paragraph. I explained to students that this was an important reading strategy, especially when summarizing information. In addition, students are often confronted with a number of texts that are difficult to recall. In this case it is important for students to distinguish between important and less important ideas so that their “memories can be used efficiently to retain the essential information in a [the] text” (Baumann 1984:94). Rose (online) discusses the marking of key information during reading and suggests three general rules that can be used to identify key information. Before any further explanations, students were given a writing task in which they had to answer the following two questions written on the chalkboard:

What is a main idea?
And, where is the main idea found?

They were given approximately 15 minutes to complete this task. This task was given in order to tap into students' understanding of the target strategy and their knowledge was used as a starting point of the lesson¹². Once students completed the task, they were asked to read out their answers and a discussion followed.

Over half of the students (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table D) had a reasonably clear understanding of the concept. This group included all three EFL students. In addition to correctly expressing their understanding of the main idea, the majority of the students stated that the main idea was to be found at the beginning of a paragraph. As an illustration,

Shikaar: The main idea is the main point that the writer wants to bring across to us and it is usually in the beginning of a passage.
(S11,WT1)

Lunga: Is the exact point the paragraph is all about. One will find this in the body and sometimes in the introduction.
(S7,WT1)

Very few students were aware that the main idea could be found elsewhere in the paragraph and not necessarily in the first sentence. This discussion led to the explanation step of the teaching process. Students were informed that a paragraph can be defined as a group of related sentences about a single topic. The three essential elements of a good paragraph are:

- i) the topic: the one thing the paragraph is about. Every sentence and idea in the paragraph relates to the topic.
- ii) the main idea: is the central or most important thought in the paragraph. The sentence that has the main idea is called the topic sentence.
- iii) details: or supporting ideas in the paragraph explain, support, prove or give reasons which explain the main idea in the paragraph (McWhorter 1995:113).

I then reinforced that the main idea was the central or most important thought in the paragraph, also indicating that the main idea could be found in several places in a paragraph as listed overleaf.

¹² It must be noted that usually the time limit given is just a way of compelling students to get on with the work. Often many of the EAL students, because of the difficulties they experience in expressing themselves, take much longer to complete the tasks.

First sentence: This is the most common place to find the main idea. The author simply states the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph and then elaborates on it;

Last sentence: This is the second most common position of the topic sentence. In this type of paragraph, the author leads or builds up to the main idea and then states it in a sentence at the very end;

Middle of the paragraph: This is another common placement of the topic sentence. In this case, the author builds up to the main idea, states it in the middle of the paragraph, and then elaborates on it; and

First and last sentences: Sometimes the main idea is stated twice in one paragraph. In this kind of paragraph, the writer usually states the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph, then explains or supports the idea, and then for emphasis restates the main idea at the end (McWhorter 1995: 121-122).

Sometimes the main idea may not be explicit, but may be implied. In this case the main idea can be inferred from the “subordinate topics” (details) in the paragraph. Not too much of time was spent on explaining the concept of main idea because most of the important points had already been covered in our discussions that arose from the Writing Task 1. After providing students with an explanation of ‘identifying the main idea in a paragraph’ I then proceeded by demonstrating using Paragraph 1 below (displayed on a transparency) how students should go about identifying the main idea in a paragraph.

Figure 8.6: Paragraph 1: identifying the main idea

Paragraph 1:
Most dentists believe that there are a few potential HBV carriers in their practice and, hence, there is little chance of infection in their office or indeed in the profession as a whole. They are not alone because the majority of the medical profession, including staff members of the hospitals, believed the same myth until recently. The number of patient population groups that have a significantly increased prevalence of HBV infection, and hence an increased prevalence of the carrier state, is much larger than one would imagine. The dentist and the entire clinical dental staff are included in these high-risk populations (Cottone *et al.* 1996:25).

Students were asked to read the paragraph silently. They were familiar with the word ‘HBV carriers’, but most of the EAL students did not know the meaning of ‘myth’ and ‘prevalence’. Students were told that sometimes clues in the text could assist us in understanding words that we do not know. For example, the word ‘same’ before the word ‘myth’ implies that the ‘myth’ was mentioned before or earlier on in the paragraph. Students were asked what information was already given to us. In response students merely read out the first sentence of the paragraph. I then asked whether the belief held

by most dentists is true or not. Students said 'no' and I explained that this was the 'myth'. The word 'prevalence' was explained using a similar technique. Thereafter the process of modelling identifying the main idea began while thinking aloud. Initially I asked the following two questions and provided the answers as given below:

- What do I have to do? I have to read the passage and find the main idea.
(This question will help learners focus on the task at hand).
- What is the main idea? The main idea is the central thought in a paragraph.
(To ensure clear understanding of the concept in order to carry out task).
- Now that I know what to do, I can begin.

Thereafter I began reading the text, at the same time underlining key words while explaining that these were important words to remember in trying to identify the main idea and in understanding the text. Questions were also asked while reading, as illustrated below:

Figure 8.7: Example of modelling the main idea

Sentence	Question/Answer/Summary
Most dentists <u>believe</u> that there are <u>few</u> <u>potential HBV carriers in their practice</u>	What do most dentists believe? That there are few potential HBV carriers in their practice. So what if they believe this? Usually a belief leads to a certain way of thinking. Let us read on to see what thought follows.
..and hence, there is <u>little chance of infection</u> in their office or indeed in the profession as a whole.	Because dentists believe there are a few potential HBV carriers in their practice they feel that the chances of getting infected in their practice and in their profession are slim. Is this belief true? I don't think so. Let us continue reading and find out.
They are not alone...	This implies that others also hold the same belief as the dentists.
..because the majority of the medical profession, including staff members of the hospitals, believed the same <u>myth, until recently</u> .	Majority of the medical profession hold the same belief but we know it's a myth. 'Until recently' implies a change. What changed?
The number of patient population groups that have a <u>significantly increased prevalence of HBV infection</u> , and hence an <u>increased prevalence of the carrier state</u> , is much larger than one would imagine.	The HBV rate of infection has increased and therefore there are more chances of the virus being spread.
<u>The dentist and the entire clinical dental staff are included in these high-risk populations.</u>	The entire dental team is at risk. And why is this information important for us future dental technicians? We need to take precautions so that we do not become infected with the HBV.

Thereafter the following questions were asked:

- What is the central thought in this paragraph? From the information I obtained (through the questions and answers) I established that the central thought in the above paragraph is: Dentist and clinical dental staff are at risk of HBV infections.
- Which sentence states the central thought? The last sentence.
- I then re-read the passage to confirm my answer (self-monitoring)¹³.

The sequence of questioning is an important part of the 'modelling' process as it raises metacognitive awareness and although the entire process was conducted at a slow pace I did not want to dwell on it too much for fear of losing the interest of the students. Students were informed that most of the questions asked helped in understanding the text better. Researchers (Fraik and Lockhart 1972; Andre and Anderson 1979; Villaume and Brabham 2002) state that the sequential development of questions, particularly higher-order questions, results in deeper levels of text processing, thereby improving comprehension and learning. While some questions were of a general nature, most were specific to the paragraph. Students were informed that when working on the various exercises they need to ask the general questions as well as their own questions that will enhance their understanding of the text. Students were then required to use the method demonstrated and work through the practice exercises provided on the worksheet (*c.f.* Appendix 8)¹⁴.

Although students worked individually on the exercises they were allowed to consult their peers if they experienced difficulty¹⁵. While students were engaged in this activity they were continuously reminded to ask questions as was demonstrated. As indicated earlier in this chapter, asking questions is a way of making students more conscious of the content and is a step towards them becoming engaged readers. Next, students were asked to compare their answers with their partners. This was found to be a useful method in getting students to engage in discussions about the content. Thereafter the

¹³ According to Pearson *et al.* (1991:157) "monitoring is the primary mechanism readers use to accomplish sense making".

¹⁴ Although the pedagogical process may seem to be very didactic, it was deliberate as students were not familiar with the modelling process (and the ethnographic interviews revealed that students had minimal exposure to reading strategies) and, therefore, needed deliberate and explicit coaching through the various processes. Later, when students were more comfortable with the process greater responsibility was shifted to them (*c.f.* Section 8.2 of this chapter).

¹⁵ Initially, when students began the task there was a buzz in the classroom as some students were 'thinking aloud'. However, other students complained that they were being disturbed. The students were then requested to work silently.

answers were reviewed. First, a volunteer read out the paragraph, then another volunteer described briefly in his/her own words what the paragraph is about. This process was for the benefit of students who struggled to grasp the content, for example, Patrick and Andiswa. Throughout the lesson it was observed that they worked very slowly. Apart from being word bound and, therefore, slow readers, they appeared to experience difficulty in understanding the content. Clearly, both these students were not yet efficient in bottom-up processing¹⁶. Second, another volunteer provided his/her answer and reasons for the answer. All students were in agreement as to what the main ideas were in each paragraph. At this point students were comfortable with the content and their answers. Third, another volunteer was asked to go through the entire process using the 'thinking aloud' method as was demonstrated earlier. Yasteel, one of the most talkative students in class, volunteered. She used Paragraph 2 (*c.f.* Appendix 8):

Figure 8.8: Paragraph 2: identifying the main idea

Paragraph 2:
Sterilization is the process by which all forms of microorganisms are destroyed, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and spores. Although methods of sterilization include the use of steam under pressure (autoclave), dry heat, chemical vapor, ethylene oxide gas, or immersion in chemical sterilant solutions, the use of the latter is discouraged. Immersion in a chemical sterilant solution instead of the use of physical means of sterilization is not recommended for several reasons (Cottone *et al.* 1996:3).

Yasteel read the first sentence and stated that this sentence merely tells us what sterilization is about¹⁷. Thereafter she continued with almost no assistance. She pointed out that if one did not know what 'latter' (in sentence 2) referred to then they would just need to read on as sentence 3 provided a clue. Yasteel did an excellent job. The other students seemed very focussed on following the demonstration by Yasteel.

When reviewing the answers for Paragraph 4 (*c.f.* Appendix 8), students' attention was drawn to the fact that VZV is the acronym for the varicella-zoster virus and that in their assignments they must first introduce the term (as done in Paragraph 4) before using the acronym. At this stage the importance of referencing conventions was also discussed

¹⁶ The importance of word recognition and lexical access was discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁷ Yasteel was about to continue reading the second sentence when I asked her if she was the educator, what test question would she set using the first sentence only. Her response was "What is sterilization?" I added that this was an important question, one that she should have asked herself and even possibly highlighted or underlined the answer.

using the references provided at the end of each paragraph as examples. Generally students (with the exception of Patrick and Andiswa) did not seem to experience much difficulty in completing the exercises. It was observed that during the lessons students seemed very enthusiastic about doing something different. They found the explanations on what is, and where to find, the main idea easy to follow.

In Lesson 4¹⁸ students worked through the 'transfer' exercises (Paragraph 5 to 10 in Worksheet 1, Appendix 8). While students were working through the exercises they were encouraged to use the method modelled in the previous lesson. Once all students had completed the task we used the 'think aloud' method described earlier to go over the answers. Most students had the 'correct' answers.

Students then wrote a reflective piece on Lesson 3 and 4¹⁹. An analysis of the reflective pieces confirmed the observation (as indicated earlier in this section) that Patrick struggled with the exercises for he responded as follows:

This day we were trying to arrange and get the main idea from what we have read from the paragraph given in class. From my point of view, I really liked the way questions were asked by the lecture but I was lost from the beginning and at last I understand what was really needed or asked. I really enjoyed and I am learning a lot every Wednesday and Thursday I even notice the way I improved my writing and understand of reading.....
(S6,WT2)

Further analysis of the reflective pieces shows that the students found the lessons very beneficial. For some, the lessons enabled them to understand the concept. This is illustrated below by the responses received from Thembe - the response given under the heading 'Prior understanding' was obtained from the writing task (Writing Task 1) given in Lesson 3 and the reflective piece response was received from the writing task (Writing Task 2) given in Lesson 4 (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table D).

¹⁸ I had planned to let learners work on the transfer exercises in class the next day, that is, in Lesson 4. However, because some learners worked very slowly during the practice exercises, the 'transfer' exercises had to be completed (Paragraphs 5 to 10 in Worksheet 1) as homework so that we would have ample discussion time the next day. However, some learners did not complete their homework and were given the first fifteen to twenty minutes of Lesson 4 to complete their work. Fortunately, these were the faster workers. The learners who had completed their homework at home were asked to work with a partner and discuss the paragraphs and their answers. Once they completed this task they had to summarize Paragraphs 5 and 6 (*c.f.* Worksheet 1, Appendix 8).

¹⁹ Although students knew what was expected of them, they were reminded that I wanted to know what they learnt from the lessons, what aspects they did and did not enjoy, and suggestions on how to improve the lesson.

Thembe:

Prior understanding: The main idea is to know more about the outside world how to improve your life and the way you think. In my case the idea is to learn new things, words and the way other people think and how I can avoid thinking that way. Sometimes when you read you learn from other peoples mistake, and as a result you grow and change the way you think about life and the people around you.
(S4, WT1)

Reflective piece: I found it very useful because now I know where to find the main idea and how to find it and what is the main idea. That helps to understand the meaning of paragraph better and make it easy to summarize the paragraph.
(S4, WT2)

It is interesting to note that Thembe was able to appreciate how recognizing the main idea of a text is of assistance when summarizing a paragraph. This was also a point that was mentioned during the explanation stage.

For other students the lessons helped to greatly improve their understanding. This is confirmed by Dhiren's responses given below.

Prior understanding: A main idea is the topic or agenda that the whole paragraph is about. A main idea would be towards the beginning of the paragraph.
(S12, WT1)

Reflective piece: The main idea is the most valuable information of the paragraph. The main idea can be found in the beginning of the paragraph, being the first sentence, the middle of the paragraph, at the end of the paragraph, being the last sentence or could be the first and last sentence of the paragraph. By reading the main idea you could save time because you won't have to read the rest of the paragraph which is only elaborating on the main idea.
(S12, WT2)

An important concern with regard to Dhiren's response is the notion that identifying the main idea of a paragraph implies that it is not necessary to read the rest of the paragraph.

It must be noted that throughout the lessons students were provided with a variety of scaffolded tasks and a significant amount of support in the form of explicit explanations, modelling, prompts and targeted questions. Once students began to acquire the targeted outcomes, support was reduced, transferring responsibility to the student. The

benefit of the various scaffolding exercises during the lesson is captured in Melanie's reflective piece. She said:

We were shown a clear view on how to identify the main idea and we practiced how to identify it. It really helped me, and I now know clearly more of what to look for and understanding the questions. I thought this was benefitting.
(S9, WT2)

Other researchers have also found that students benefited from being provided with instructions on how to identify the main idea in a text. For example, Baumann (1984)²⁰ found that his experimental group performed much better than the control group in comprehending the main ideas (*c.f.* Chapter 4).

This section explains the process students used in identifying the main idea in a paragraph, the primary goal of which is to ultimately improve reading comprehension. In addition to the main idea, vocabulary knowledge can also enhance comprehension. Several researchers (Beck *et al.* 1982; Nelson-Herber 1986; Kilfoil 1998; Baker 1995; Duke and Pearson 2002) have shown a correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. In order to increase students vocabulary knowledge they were taught how to use context clues to find the meaning of unfamiliar words. The teaching of 'context clues' is discussed in the next section.

8.4.2 Guessing the meaning of words from the context

Alvermann and Phelps (1994:235) state that while context clues are useful reading strategies, they also can be misleading. They do, however, acknowledge that there is ample evidence that instruction in using context clues is effective. To be most effective, instruction in using context clues should be used together with direct instruction in the meanings of specific words. The importance of teaching students to use context clues to guess the meaning of words in texts has been stressed by many researchers, for example, Kruse (1979), Mason and Au (1990), Pittelmann and Heimlich (1991), and Ying (2001). According to Pittelmann and Heimlich (1991), persons who do not have a wide vocabulary and have not been exposed to techniques and strategies for inferring the meanings of unknown words, in general will have comprehension difficulties. Kilfoil (1998:36) says that the amount of vocabulary the student knows does contribute significantly to academic success. Vocabulary plays an important role in understanding

what we read or hear and in saying or writing exactly what we intend. Many EAL students often come into tertiary level with limited vocabulary knowledge. This fact was clearly evident early on in the research when students did not know the meaning of the words 'myth' and 'prevalence'. Their limited knowledge of meanings of words in a text can stifle their reading comprehension. Kilfoil (1998) argues that the direct teaching of words is limiting since one can only teach a few words at a time. Instead, Kilfoil says that students should be taught strategies that would enable them to become independent learners and readers and also to cope when they experience difficulty during reading. This section describes the attempt made to raise students' awareness of the different context clues that exist as well as how these can be used to enhance reading comprehension.

The designed outcomes of Lesson 5 (*c.f.* Appendix 9) were that at the end of the lesson students should be able to figure out the meaning of a word from the words around it. They should also be familiar with the hints/clues that can suggest the meaning of a particular word in a sentence, paragraph, or passage. Lesson 5 began with a writing task, the purpose of which was to determine how much students knew about context clues as well as a way of activating their prior knowledge. Students had to answer the following questions

What are context clues?
And, what are some of the things you do when you experience
difficulty understanding a word?

Students were given approximately fifteen minutes to complete this task²¹. They then worked in pairs and compared their answers. While monitoring their activities it was observed that students were not engaging in 'rich' discussions as almost all their answers related to either consulting a dictionary or asking someone for the meaning of the unknown word. This situation resulted from their insufficient awareness of other reading strategies that exist (*c.f.* Chapter 6). When reading out their responses, Yachna was the only student to show some understanding of what context clues are. She said "I

²⁰ It must be noted that Baumann (1984) used 'direct instruction' to teaching (*c.f.* Section 8.2). Baumann (1984) did not raise the students' level of metacognitive awareness by using the 'think aloud' method.

²¹ Before students put pen to paper, it was found that none of them understood the term 'context clues' and were unable to begin. Students were told that context clues are clues provided in the text that can be used to help in understanding difficult words. Further information was deliberately not provided in order not to influence their answers to the second part of the question.

would continue to read the sentence to try to fit the word into context...” (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table E). As observed from the conversations earlier on, all students reported either using the dictionary or seeking assistance from someone else. This was also a finding of the interviews (*c.f.* Chapter 6).

Students are confronted constantly with new words and concepts in their disciplines. Often these words and concepts are outside of their personal frame of reference and present a barrier to learning the content of their discipline. The quotation by Thembie and Pete, which is provided in Chapter 7 (*c.f.* Section 7.3.3), reinforces this point. Vocabulary development is, therefore, important. While educators need to teach discipline specific terminology before the actual lesson²², often students are confronted with equally complex terminology outside the classroom. Therefore, they need knowledge of strategies that will help them to cope with unknown words outside of the classroom context. The fact that students are not aware of other strategies (apart from using the dictionary) that can assist them in understanding difficult words is a problem that has its roots in the schooling system. The traditional approach in teaching vocabulary in schools is to either provide students with a list of ‘difficult’ words and their meanings that they have to memorize, or to encourage them to consult a dictionary. As pointed out in Chapter 4 and 6, both approaches are very limiting. Pittelmann and Heimlich (1991:45) suggest that the instructional approaches used “must provide students with multiple opportunities to build both conceptual and contextual knowledge of the words.....” which both the methods above fail to do.

After the writing task it was explained to students that during reading they could guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in their academic texts by using clues that are usually provided in the text. The explanation proceeded as follows. Often, among the unfamiliar words are various clues that allow the reader to reason out the meaning of the unknown word. The words around an unknown word that contain clues to its meaning are referred to as the context. The clues themselves are called ‘context clues’ (McWhorter 1995:348). Students should be able to recognise the different kinds of clues. Sometimes, however, there may not be enough hints in the text to work out the meaning. In this case, if all else fails (as a last resort), students can make use of their dictionaries.

²² Rose (online) in his discussion of scaffolding academic literacy suggests that during ‘detailed reading’ academic terms be explained to students.

After this explanation students were given a worksheet (c.f. Appendix 9, Worksheet 2) on how to use sentence hints for word meanings. The worksheet, which was adopted from the work of Wiener and Bazerman (1988:11), consisted of several hints. An example and explanation for each hint was also provided, as illustrated below:

Figure 8.9: Example from Worksheet Two: context clues

Hint	Example	Explanation
Some sentences set off the definition for a difficult word by means of punctuation.	<i>Origami</i> – Japanese paper folding – is family fun. <i>Fibrin</i> , elastic threads of protein, helps blood clot.	Dashes -, Parenthesis (), Brackets [], Commas

The hints, examples, and explanations as per the worksheet (c.f. Appendix 9) were discussed in detail. The process was carried out very slowly because some of the EAL students, especially Andiswa, Edna and Patrick, required a second or third explanation.

For the next step, which was modelling how to use context clues, the following paragraph was placed on the overhead projector:

Figure 8.10: Paragraph 11: context clues

<p>Paragraph 11: Hepatitis B, an inflammation of the liver, is a major health problem in the United States and is <u>endemic</u> (occurs regularly) in other parts of the world. Between 2000,000 and 3000,000 people are infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) each year. Approximately 10,000 will require hospitalization, approximately 250 will die of <u>fulminant hepatitis</u> (an overwhelming and rapidly destructive form of the disease), and approximately 15,000 will become chronic carriers of the virus (Miller and Palenik 1998:54).</p>
--

Sibongile (one of the quieter students in class) was asked to read the paragraph. She experienced difficulty in reading the numbers 2,000,000 and 3,000,000. At this point, some mathematical literacy was included in the lesson. Thereafter the process of using context clues was modelled by asking the following questions:

- What do I have to do? I have to use clues from the context to find the meaning of the unknown word (in this case the underlined words).
- What are context clues? They are hints provided by the words and sentences surrounding the unfamiliar word.
- Now that I have a clear understanding of my task, I begin by reading the paragraph.

To recapitulate the following questions were asked: -

- What are the context clues in the paragraph that gives an indication of the meaning of the underlined word? The use of brackets for the words 'endemic' and 'fulminant hepatitis'.
Endemic means occurring regularly and fulminant hepatitis is an overwhelming and rapidly destructive form of the disease.
- What is the most important point in the paragraph? Hepatitis B is a major health problem in the US and occurs regularly in other parts of the world.
- Why? The other sentences in the paragraph merely provide support.
- How? By providing statistics (figures) to stress the seriousness of the virus.

Figure 8.11: Modelling the use of context clues

Sentence	Question/Answer/Summary
Hepatitis B, an inflammation of the liver,...	What is Hepatitis B? The text informs the reader that Hepatitis B is an inflammation of the liver.
...is a major health problem in the United States...	Only in the United States? What about other countries? I would think it is a problem in other countries as well.
...and is <u>endemic</u> (occurs regularly) in other parts of the world.	I was correct – it does occur regularly in other parts of the world. Endemic means occurring regularly.
Between 2000,000 and 3000,000 people are infected with the HBV each year.	These figures are given for the number of people infected throughout the world. I wonder how many people are infected in SA?
Approximately 10,000 will require hospitalization, approximately 250 will die of fulminant hepatitis (an overwhelming and rapidly destructive form of the disease),...	Fulminant hepatitis is an overwhelming and rapidly destructive form of HB.
...approximately 15,000 will become chronic carriers of the virus.	What happens to the remaining number of people that are infected? I guess they would be cured.

By recapitulating one is able to monitor the task at hand as well as their reading comprehension. According to Urquhart and Weir (1998:186), self-monitoring involves checking that comprehension is taking place and adopting repair strategies when it is not. They assert that self-monitoring is “seen as a hallmark of skilled reading”.

Students did not seem to experience any difficulty in following the modelling process. Furthermore, the context clues in Paragraph 11 were obvious ones and the content easy

to follow. After the modelling session students were given the following exercises to practice on:

Figure 8.12: Paragraph 12: use of context clues

Paragraph 12:
Hepatitis B virus is spread percutaneously (through the skin) or permucosally (through mucous membranes) by contact with infected body fluids, for example, at birth, during sexual activities, or with contaminated needles or other sharp objects (Miller and Palenik 1998:58).

Figure 8.13: Paragraph 13: use of context clues

Paragraph 13:
If symptoms develop after infection, they begin to appear approximately 2.5 to 6 months after exposure. Roughly one third of those infected exhibit the more easily recognizable symptoms of yellowing of the skin (jaundice) and whites of the eyes, light-colored stools, dark urine, joint pain, fever, a rash, and itching. Approximately another one third develop less descript mild symptoms that may include malaise ("not feeling good"), loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain. The other one-third develop no symptoms at all. Thus two-thirds of all those infected develop no symptoms or have mild non-descript symptoms that are often unrecognized as being related to hepatitis. Yet symptomatic and asymptomatic cases can spread the virus to others. This unrecognizable infection with HBV and with other viruses (such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), serves as the basis for universal precautions – applying infection control procedures during care for all patients not just for those who are known to be infected (Miller and Palenik 1998: 59).

Students first worked individually on the two paragraphs and then discussed their answers with a partner. They were reminded to ask the questions as was demonstrated during the modelling process. It was observed that Paragraph 12, which was a shorter and relatively straight-forward paragraph, presented no problems, but students did experience some problems²³ with Paragraph 13 which was a longer paragraph and consisted of quite a few 'difficult' words. Therefore, the discussion of Paragraph 13 proceeded slowly to ensure that all students were following. Once students completed Paragraphs 12 and 13 a volunteer read the paragraph and gave us a brief summary of each paragraph. Thereafter other volunteers read out the underlined words and discussed the clues that assisted them in understanding the word. The explanations that students presented were elaborated on, ensuring that all students understood how

the hints/clues in the paragraphs were used. Students struggled with the words 'descript' and 'non-descript' as no clues were provided. However, one could get a sense of the word after careful reading. In explaining these words to the students they were alerted to the fact that the second sentence discusses 'recognizable symptoms' while the fourth sentence discusses 'no symptoms'. They were asked what falls in-between 'recognizable symptoms' and 'no symptoms'. Students responded with answers such as 'a little bit', 'vague symptoms' and 'not easily detected'. I then explained to students that the word descript means having 'special or distinctive qualities', therefore, less descript would mean having less distinctive qualities and non-descript would mean have no distinctive qualities.

A volunteer was then asked to use Paragraph 13 to illustrate to the class the process demonstrated earlier on. Shikaar eventually volunteered and with prompting and assistance he managed the process. The intention was to enable students to see that asking questions during reading is not a difficult process and with practice one can become better at it.

At the end of Lesson 5, students were asked to complete the homework exercises which were provided in the worksheet (*c.f.* Appendix 9, Worksheet 2). These exercises served to reinforce the guidelines given to identify context clues in a sentence/paragraph. Students were expected to write down each underlined word and the meaning of the word next to it. They were also reminded to use the method demonstrated earlier in class. In Lesson 6, which was held the next day, working in pairs, students compared and discussed their answers. They were also encouraged to discuss their understanding of each paragraph. Thereafter we reviewed the answers. To bring to a close the lesson on guessing the meanings of words in context, students were asked to write a reflective piece on the lessons on 'using context clues'. They were not provided with a specific question(s), but rather allowed for open responses. An analysis of the reflective pieces (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table E) indicates that a few students found the homework exercises very challenging. Patrick, who as indicated earlier had experienced difficulty throughout the lesson, failed to grasp the essence of the lesson as can be seen from his reflective

²³ Andile, Pumlani, and Edna reported that the paragraph was confusing because it had too many difficult words and that they had to read it many times before they could understand. In Chapter 2, I discussed that students with a limited recognition vocabulary are restricted in their reading ability.

response. He stated “I found [the lesson] very challenging because we had to go through the content alone....” (S6, WT4).

Patrick was not able to use some of the context clues to get the meaning of words and resorted to using the dictionary. Yet, except for Paragraph 16 (*c.f.* Appendix 9, Worksheet 2) all clues were provided in the text. Patrick resorted to using the dictionary, but experienced problems as most of the words were discipline specific terminology. He said:

I did find some of the words but not all because some words basically belongs to the medical term.... I finally went to the library to find out the meaning of the words and was also hard because I had no idea of which dictionary will assist me to find the precise meaning of the disease. (S6, WT4)

Patrick must be admired for his perseverance. Earlier in the year, as part of the Academic Literacy course, students attended lessons in information literacy (IL). In one of the IL lessons, students were taught how to use the Online Public Accessing Catalogue (OPAC) and were shown the location of the different Dental Technology Dictionaries. In spite of these difficulties, Patrick did report that he found the lessons beneficial because they made him aware of the existence of ‘context clues’.

For most students the lessons were successful in raising their awareness and use of ‘context clues’. All students reported that the lessons were beneficial. To illustrate, the responses received from Sibongile and Vilakazi are provided below:

Sibongile: I benefitted a lot from this lesson. Because at first I didn’t notice these tricks of finding the meaning of the word from the context. I used to look for the meaning of word in the dictionary. Now I know that I read the whole sentence or sentences in the paragraph and find the meaning of the word. I also learns about the clues that can help me find the meaning of the word.... (S5, WT4)

Vilakazi: I think using clues in the paragraph to find the meaning of the word is useful and really saves time rather than going back to your dictionary or start looking for a person who knows the word to tell you the meaning. (S8, WT4)

Some students, for example, Edna, realised that the constant use of the dictionary is not always the best method to use in understanding difficult words. Edna stated:

Searching for the meaning of unfamiliar words in the dictionary or in the internet is not an easiest way to do. So by reading through this worksheet, I found that this kind of clues are simple and comprehensible. The other think that interest me most on this sheet is the paragraph exercises that we have to practice on our own to see if whether we do understand our work. (S1, WT4)

As found earlier in the lessons for identifying the main idea in a paragraph, Edna's comment shows that students appreciated being taken through a practice session where they could apply what they had learnt. Further, the use of discipline specific material made the lessons more meaningful for students. As indicated in the methodology (*c.f.* Chapter 5), discipline specific content was used in designing the lessons. An important observation from the above response is that while Edna was attempting to use the clues in the context to understand words she also engaged with the content. This highlights the importance of using an integrated approach to the teaching of reading strategies. Using discipline specific material makes the exercise more meaningful for the student and thereby promotes the learning process. This point is also stressed by other researchers, for example, Idol *et al.* (1991:76) who say that instruction should preferably be "conducted within subject matter areas and within the context of tasks that have meaning for learners". Quinn (1999:30) states that "Academic literacy can only be achieved by engaging with the discipline content, especially in writing". Taking this point a step further, proponents of the New Literacy Studies (Street 1995; Gee 2000) claim that a student's literacy-related difficulties can only be addressed successfully through the mainstream curriculum. Thus far the process students went through in identifying the main idea in a paragraph and using context clues to guess the meaning of words in a text, has been described in detail. These two reading strategies are important steps in reading comprehension. They are also fundamental to the summarization process which was the ultimate aim. The next section presents the lessons on summarization.

8.4.3 Summarizing information

At tertiary level, and in most disciplines, the student's ability to summarize information from texts is of utmost importance (Alvermann and Qian 1994, Kirkland and Saunders 1991, Balfour 2002). Students in Higher Education are often assessed through assignments and the writing of assignments usually entails the summarization of information from a variety of sources. Further, students often need to supplement their lecture notes. In the collection of base-line data (*c.f.* Chapter 5 and Chapter 7) many

lecturers listed summarization as a strategy that their students are unable to perform adequately. Often, when writing assignments, students are not able to extract the essentials from the non-essentials and simply choose some sentences to copy or paraphrase. While the ability to identify the essence of a paragraph as well as vocabulary knowledge is necessary in making a summary, it is not sufficient. According to Dole *et al.* (1991:244), "The ability to summarize information requires readers to sift through large units of text, differentiate important from unimportant ideas, and then synthesize those ideas and create a new coherent text that stands for, by substantive criteria, the original". Research (Kirkland and Saunders 1991; Alvermann and Qian 1994) has shown that although summarization is a complex, recursive reading-writing activity, it is a strategy that can be taught successfully to students who experience difficulties with reading. Pearson and Fielding (1991) say that summarization training transfers to new texts. They further state that...

Students understand and remember ideas better when they have to transform those ideas from one form to another. Apparently it is in this transformation process that author's ideas become reader's ideas, rendering them more memorable (1991:847).

This section describes the explicit teaching of summarization, the designed outcome of which was that at the end of the lessons students should be able to summarize a passage/text to the required length whilst retaining the focus of the original text.

Lesson 7 began with a writing task in which students were asked to answer the following questions:

What is a summary?
And, when and why do we make summaries?

Students were given approximately ten minutes to complete this task. After completing this task, working in groups of threes they discussed and debated their answers and eventually came up with one answer for each of the above questions. Thereafter a spokesperson for each group read out the group answers. Students had a clear understanding what a summary was, when and why we make summaries. This may be due to the fact that throughout high school students are expected to summarise information for assignments, projects, and tests. It is possible that their educators may

have explained to students their expectations of a summary without actually teaching them how to write a summary. The students' understanding of what is a summary is also reflected in their individual responses (c.f. Appendix 13, Table F(i)). As an illustration:

- Vilakazi: A summary is when a person uses few words to say or write something which is actually longer, stressing only the important points. (S8, WT5)
- Dhiren: A summary is a shortened piece of information that contain the main ideas or points within a coherent paragraph. (S12, WT5)

It must be noted that although the students' responses showed that they knew what the concept of summarization was, it does not necessarily imply that they are proficient in summarizing. Although a student, for example Dhiren, is aware that a summary must contain the main points written in a coherent paragraph, many students when making summaries simply choose some sentences to copy or paraphrase and leave out others. Often the paragraph contains a string of sentences unrelated to each other. Friend (2000) says that "...in order to enhance learning, summarization should be a process in which the ideas of a passage are related to one another, weighed, and condensed; a process of synthesis, not selection". The students also were able to point out that summaries are made when studying for a test or examination and when writing a report or an assignment. This can be seen below from the response given by Shikaar...

- We make summaries all the time, but we should use summaries most when we are close to the examinations and when we are learning and when we are getting important lectures which in some cases could be long. (S11, WT5)

The students concurred that summaries of texts are made essentially to improve understanding. For example, Sibongile stated that we summarise "For better understanding, in order for us to easily know or see what is going on without confusion", (S5, WT5) and Shikaar said "The main reason we summarise information is to shorten and to make what we are focusing on easier to understand" (S11, WT5). However, summarising information for tests and examinations often presents a problem for many students who do not know what information is important or how to synthesize information. If their summaries do not focus on the relevant information, or if their attempts at paraphrasing results in producing incorrect information, then they fare badly

in tests or examinations. Students are often puzzled by their poor performance. This was evident in the response provided by Yasteel who stated...

When writing assignments I don't experience difficulty. I think I do quite well in that but when the assignment comes back to me I am confused as to why my marks are so low. I don't understand why the marks are so low. All the information is there yet the marks are low. (Interview 1: 30/04/04)

After the groups had a chance to present their answers an explanation was given that a summary is a brief statement or list of ideas that identifies the major concepts in a passage or section of a textbook. Its main purpose is to record the most important ideas in a condensed form (McWhorter 1995:237). The summarizing rules as proposed by Brown and Day (1983:2) which can be used as a guideline also were discussed:

- Select a topic sentence. If there is no topic sentence, invent your own.
- Delete unnecessary material, that is, material that is trivial and redundant.
- Substitute a superordinate term or event for a list of items or actions. For example, the term *pets* can be substituted for *cats, dogs, rabbits, and parrots*. Alternately, a superordinate action (*John went to London*) can be substituted for a list of subcomponents of an action such as *John left the house, John went to the train station and John bought a ticket*.

The above points are suggested guidelines. The purpose of making the summary must be kept in mind at all times, as the purpose of our summary would determine what information we choose to include and not include in the summary. The above guideline as well as the practice and homework exercises were given to students on a worksheet (c.f. Appendix 10, Worksheet 3). Using the rules listed above as a guideline, the process of summarization was modelled while working with paragraph 18:

Figure 8.14: Paragraph 18: summarization

Paragraph 18:

Vaccination against Hepatitis B: Dental health care workers are at a greater risk than the general population for acquiring Hepatitis B through contact with patients. It is the policy of the American Dental Association (ADA) that all dentists and their staff having patient contact should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. The Occupational Safety Health Association (OSHA) Standard now requires that employers make the Hepatitis B vaccine available to occupationally exposed employees, at the employer's expense, within 10 working days of assignment of tasks that may result in exposure (Cottone *et al.* 1996:2).

The demonstration proceeded with the following questions:

- What am I required to do? I have to make a summary.
- What do I do first? Read the passage. If I am not sure of what I read, then I must re-read. If I am sure then I must underline the main idea or topic sentence (as the guideline suggests).

Figure 8.15: Modelling summarization

Sentence	Question/Answer/Summary
<u>Vaccination against Hepatitis B</u>	Use of different font for sub-heading. Tells us what the paragraph is about.
Dental Health care workers are at a greater risk than the general population for acquiring Hepatitis B through contact with patients.	Why? Because they work closely with patients. In this sentence I can substitute 'professionals' for 'health care workers'. I do not really need to use 'than the general population' and 'contact with patients'.
It is the policy of the ADA that all dentists and their staff having patient contact should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.	If it's a policy it has to be followed. The policy states that all dental professionals should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. For this summary I do not need to mention ADA.
The OSHA Standard now requires that employees make the Hepatitis B vaccine available to occupationally exposed employees,...	Employees must make the vaccine available to their workers. For this summary I do not need to mention OSHA.
...at the employer's expense, within 10 working days of assignment of tasks that may result in exposure	The vaccine must be made available within 10 working days of contact with patient.

To recapitulate:

- What is the main idea? It is the central thought in the paragraph, that is, "Vaccination against Hepatitis B".
- What do I do next? I must leave out unnecessary words, for example, repetitions, examples, or descriptions and use one word instead of many.
- Using the questions/answers/summary in Figure 8.15 I can now write my summary.

- Hepatitis B is a great risk for Dental professionals. All dentists and their staff who have contact with patients should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. All employers must make the vaccine available to their staff at no charge, 10 working days before exposure.
- Once completed, I must read my summary. Does it make sense? Have I captured the essence of the paragraph?

After the modelling process students were requested to read Paragraph 19. They were then required to discuss the paragraph with their partners and to focus on relevant/irrelevant information, difficult words and the essence (main idea) of the paragraph. They were given approximately ten minutes for this task. Some pairs worked much slower than other pairs and consequently required more time. Once this task was completed, the students were asked to use the method modelled to make individual summaries.

Figure 8.16: Paragraph 19: summarization

Paragraph 19:

Barrier techniques: gloves must be worn when skin contact with body fluids or mucous membranes is anticipated, or when touching items or surfaces that may be contaminated with these fluids. After contact with each patient, gloves must be removed, hands must be washed, and then regloved before treating another patient. Repeated use of a single pair of gloves by disinfecting them between patients is not acceptable. Exposure to disinfectants or other chemicals often causes defects in gloves, thereby diminishing their value as effective barriers. Latex or vinyl gloves should be used for patient examinations and procedures. Heavy rubber gloves, should preferably be used for cleaning instruments and environmental surfaces. Dentists should be aware that allergic reactions to latex gloves or the cornstarch powder in gloves have been reported in health care workers and patients. To reduce the possibility of such reactions, nylon glove liners for use under latex, rubber or plastic gloves are available. Polyethylene gloves, also known as food-handlers' gloves, may be worn over treatment gloves to prevent contamination of objects such as drawer or light handles or charts (Cottone *et al.* 1996:2)

Notes made during classroom observations showed that most of the students coped with the practice exercises. The discussions held with their partners made the task of summarising much easier. Patrick and Andiswa once again worked much more slowly than other students. Edna also seemed to struggle a little. Once students completed their summaries the paragraph was read out aloud and using the modelling process, I summarized the paragraph which I wrote down on the board. On reflection, students should have been asked to do this task.

At the end of Lesson 7 students were given two paragraphs to summarize for homework²⁴. Students were also required to write a reflective piece on the lesson on summarization (*c.f.* Appendix 13, Table F(ii)). All students gave positive responses. For example, Patrick said:

I always struggle to know what to put in my assignments. In the lesson we learnt what information to leave out and what to add. I still struggle with the exercises but now I know better. The exercises help me to complete my assignment.
(S6, WT6)

Patrick's response shows that while he feels that he did benefit from the lesson, he still experienced difficulty when completing the exercises, indicating that he needs further reinforcement.

This section discusses the process used to teach students how to summarise information. In the previous two sections the focus was on identifying the main idea and using context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. The teaching of individual reading strategies with demonstrations (modelling) followed by practice exercises was conducted in order to raise students' awareness of the existence of the target reading strategies by providing them with information on what the strategy is, and when, and how it could be used. Finally, students were given additional exercises which allowed them to apply what they learnt. Students engaged in discussions, clarifying and confirming their answers, while either working in pairs or groups. However, apart from being taught single strategies, students must be able to use multiple strategies simultaneously, which is essential when reading academic material. The next section describes the simultaneous teaching of the three reading strategies.

8.5 Simultaneous use of all three reading strategies

According to Stahl (1997:9) reading involves the flexible use of processes for different purposes. During reading, a number of processes may be executed simultaneously. Teaching students to use the above strategies (that is, identifying the main idea, using context clues and summarization) simultaneously would also ensure that students are able to transfer or generalise the strategies learnt to new and different situations. Using the cognitive apprenticeship approach to reading instruction students were provided with

²⁴ Due to time constraints these were filed in students' portfolios and responded to at a later stage.

a great deal of scaffolding with gradual transfer of control over to them. The instructional process implemented is now presented.

Lesson 9 began by recapitulating what we had covered in the previous weeks. It must be noted that only six students were present for this lesson²⁵. The students present were all EAL students and also the weaker students in the class. The lesson continued with an explanation that while each of the reading strategies taught is important, they are not sufficient on their own. A good reader should be able to use a combination of strategies simultaneously. Students were informed that in this lesson they would be shown how to use all three reading strategies in an integrated manner²⁶. Each student was provided with a photocopy of a chapter from a book entitled “Infection Control and Management of Hazardous Materials for the Dental Team” (Miller and Palenik 1998) to use in class²⁷. Students were very interested in the article and immediately began flipping through the pages as they realised that the article could be used for their assignments (*c.f.* Appendix 5 for assignment question). Students were encouraged to preview the article, specifically looking at the headings and subheadings. Previewing is an important pre-reading strategy that has many benefits for readers. It can help activate schemata before the reading process and can also contribute to the reading process (Urquhart and Weir 1998:183). By previewing a text, readers can decide whether the text is relevant or not. Hence previewing can save the reader time as it prevents the prolonged reading of material that has little or no value (Nuttall 1996:45-48). It also can alert the reader to the level of difficulty of the text in comparison to other texts. After giving students a few minutes to preview the chapter, they were informed that in this class lesson we would be working with the second paragraph on page 54 which was put up on the over-head projector (OHP). I reiterated that the main idea strategy, context clues, the summarization guidelines as well as the ‘think aloud’ process to summarise Paragraph 22, would be used:

²⁵ The reason given for the poor attendance was that students were preparing for a test that they were writing that afternoon.

²⁶ By now the students’ interest had been piqued and they seemed eager to continue with the lesson.

Figure 8.17: Paragraph 22: combined strategy use

Paragraph 22: Bloodborne pathogens may infect different blood cells or other tissue of the body but during infection pathogens exist or are released into the blood or other body fluids, which may include semen, vaginal secretion, intestinal secretions, tears, mothers' milk, synovial (joint) fluid, pericardial (around the heart) fluid, amniotic fluids (surround the developing fetus), and saliva in dentistry. Because blood or other body fluids may contain the pathogens, the disease may be spread from one person to another by contact with the fluids. Thus the diseases are called bloodborne diseases. Bloodborne pathogens may enter the mouth during dental procedures that induce bleeding. Thus contact with saliva during such procedures may result in exposure to these pathogens if present. Because it is very difficult to determine if blood is actually present in saliva, saliva from all dental patients should be considered potentially infectious (Miller and Palenik 1998:54).

As indicated earlier in this chapter, modelling is the most explicit method of teaching reading strategies. The lesson began by reading the paragraph aloud fairly quickly without stopping to think about 'difficult' words and without re-reading any information. The purpose of the first reading was to gain an overall impression of the paragraph. Students were informed that from the first reading one could gather that the main idea is that saliva from all dental patients should be considered potentially dangerous. The first sentence was then read out and while doing so the words that students might experience difficulty with were underlined, for example, pathogens, intestinal, synovial, pericardial and amniotic. The meanings of these words were discussed specifically, explaining how the clues in the text were used to derive the meaning. Thereafter students were reminded of the guidelines for summarizing, in particular, the deletion and substitution rules. It was then pointed out that in the first sentence examples of 'other body fluids' is given, that is, from "which may include...." to "developing fetus". This information is not necessary and can be left out. However, "...saliva in dentistry" is important information because this is one way in which germs/diseases can be spread in dentistry. The second sentence was then read and an explanation given that from "Because.....to pathogens" is important information that dental technicians need to know and after reading this sentence one could gather that the first part of sentence one is merely background information which is important to know as general knowledge, but not for the purpose of the summary. Since we already know from the first sentence why bloodborne diseases are referred to as such we, therefore, do not need the third sentence. The fourth sentence tells us that bloodborne pathogens may enter the mouth

²⁷ The first page of the chapter is presented in Appendix 14. Due to copyright infringement rules the entire

during dental procedures that induce bleeding, and the fifth sentence informs us that contact with saliva during such procedures may lead to exposure to pathogens. These are important points that need to be included in the summary. The last sentence was then read, pointing out that in this sentence we only need the last part of the sentence, that is, “saliva from all dental patients should be considered potentially infectious” and stressed that this is important information. Having decided what information is relevant/not relevant I can begin the summary which was then written on the chalkboard as follows:

Germs may be transmitted from one person to another via blood or body fluids. During dental procedures diseases may be spread through blood or saliva to or from the patient. Hence, all patients should be considered as potentially infectious and proper infection control procedures should be taken when treating them. (9/06/06)

Once completed, the summary was reread to check that the same message as the original text was conveyed²⁸.

As practice, students were asked to use the method demonstrated above to summarize Paragraph 23 (overleaf). As indicated earlier in this chapter, the think-aloud method was used in order to raise students' levels of meta-awareness.

Some students took long to complete the exercise and there was not much time left for discussion. Thus, the discussion was left for the next lesson. In Lesson 10 a volunteer was asked to demonstrate to the class the process they used to summarize the paragraph. After much coaxing, Lunga volunteered. However, very early in the process he gave up, despite all my encouragement. The process of thinking aloud is obviously new to students and it is understandable that they would feel awkward. In light of this we went over the process together using the same method used in the demonstration the previous day.

chapter cannot be provided.

²⁸ When going through the above exercise with students, different coloured pens were used to highlight different aspects, for example, when identifying the main idea, when using context clues to understand what was read, and when using the guidelines for summarizing, as well as highlighting the information that was needed and deleting the information not needed. I went through the entire process very slowly, ensuring that students were with me each step of the way. Apart from explaining to students what I was doing, I kept thinking aloud so that they could follow my thought processes. The entire process took approximately twenty minutes.

Figure 8.18: Paragraph 23

<p>Paragraph 23: Aerosol Hazards: Dental Personnel at Risk</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dentist 2. Dental Assistant 3. Hygienist 4. Laboratory technician 5. Additional office personnel <p>Dentists, dental assistants, and hygienists are exposed to aerosols that may contain bacteria, viruses, tooth debris, or particles of dental materials and should be considered at risk. Patients exposed to these contaminated mists may be at some risk of cross contamination from other patients because of the long period of time these minute particles can remain suspended in the air. Laboratory technicians may be exposed to bacterial aerosols when polishing dentures or appliances that have been in the mouth. In addition, many of their procedures involve the grinding or polishing of various dental materials that could create an aerosol. As for other personnel, such as receptionists or clerks, there is some indication that they may be exposed to aerosols created in the laboratory or operator. It has been demonstrated that bacterial aerosols created by polishing dentures with contaminated pumice can be distributed throughout a dental office by a forced-air heating/cooling system. Perhaps even more indicative of the risk was the discovery that these same bacteria could be detected in the nose and pharynx of patients in the other rooms of the dental office. Therefore, it appears that these aerosols have the ability to travel on air currents and contaminate individuals in all areas of the dental office, and not just those at the source of the aerosol (Goldman <i>et al.</i> 1984:24).</p>
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The summaries of two students are provided below:

Summary 1: Edna

All aerosols should be considered harmful to persons in the dental profession. Patients affect by the aerosols pass on the viruses through contact to other patients. The bacteria also travel through air and are passed from dentists to their assistants, to laboratory technicians and to admin workers.

Although Edna's summary is brief she clearly misrepresented the paragraph. This was pointed out to her. She was asked to re-read the paragraph and discuss its content, which she interpreted correctly. She realized that her summary did not convey the same message. Edna definitely needed more practice in summary writing. The importance of re-reading both the text and individual summaries to determine whether the correct message is being conveyed was stressed. Sibongile, one of the brighter students in the class, produced a more concise summary.

Summary 2: Sibongile

Dental Personnel face hazardous conditions due to bacteria containing aerosol emissions in their surgeries. Bacteria remain in the air for extensive periods and can travel among patients. The cleaning of dental appliances puts lab workers at risk. The spreading of contaminated pumice emitted through cleaning of dentures appliances may affect all staff. Patients in surrounding consultation rooms also risk bacterial infection owing to the ease with which aerosols travel via air.

For additional practice students were asked to read the chapter given and summarize whatever information they needed for their assignments. Students were encouraged to read their assignment topic once more before beginning with the chapter. Students were also required to write a reflective piece. They had to respond to the following questions:

- Did you experience any difficulty in following my demonstration?;
- What did you enjoy about this lesson?;
- What did you not like? and,
- Do you think you would be able to use the reading strategies that you learnt?

Unfortunately, only four students (Patrick, Andiswa, Vilakazi and Lunga) completed their reflective pieces. Their responses were very positive. They reported that they did not experience any difficulty in following the think-aloud demonstrations and they enjoyed the lessons. Both Patrick and Andiswa said that Paragraph 23 was difficult. Andiswa was not able to explain why she experienced difficulty, but Patrick indicated that the content was difficult to understand as “there was too many words”. However, he realized how simple it was during the class discussion. In response to the last question Patrick and Lunga said:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Patrick: | Yes the reading strategies I use. I find them very benefitting but I sometimes find it very hard to do all the things one time. I have to think of the questions to ask and it take me long...The lessons help me to improve my reading.
(S6, WT7) |
| Lunga: | It is not something I am used to. I have to remember that I have to use it.
(S7, WT7) |

This task brought to an end the teaching of the combined reading strategies. In the next lesson (Lesson 11) students were given the reading strategy post-test and in Lesson 12, they were given the TELP post-test, which punctuated the project. The results of the pre-tests and post-tests are presented in the next section.

8.6 Assessment of academic progression

In this section, the results from the reading strategy pre-test and post-test (*c.f.* Figure 8.19), as well as the TELP pre-and post-tests are discussed. The purpose of the reading strategy tests was to assess students' understanding of the target reading strategies before and after the reading strategy interventions. The TELP pre-and post-tests were conducted to measure the students' language proficiency before and after the reading strategy interventions.

Should the students' performance in the reading strategy post-test be better than that in the pre-test, then one may conclude that the interventions were successful in raising the students' awareness and competency in the use of the target reading strategies. As indicated earlier, the reading strategy pre-test was conducted in Lesson 2 (Week 1), while the post-test was conducted in Lesson 11 (Week 6). It must be noted as indicated earlier in the methodology (*c.f.* Chapter 5), the two tests were designed by myself and assessed by two independent colleagues for levels of difficulty without them being aware of the identities of the two tests, that is, which was the pre-test or post-test. They concurred that the post-test was more difficult. The results of both the tests are shown below in Figure 8.19.

The Columns A and B in Figure 8.19 show the reading strategy pre-test and post-test results, respectively, for the group of twelve students who participated in the ethnographic inquiry and action research components of the research study. The columns indicate the marks obtained out of a total of twenty-five. For these students the post-test was conducted after the reading strategy interventions. On the other hand, the results of the post-test in Column C were for a group of first entry students on the mainstream programme in the same discipline. These students participated on a voluntary basis on condition that their names were not divulged. These twelve students did not write the pre-test and were not subjected to any interventions. They were included in order to make a comparison of their performance with the performance of the primary participants (that is, the group of twelve students on the extended first year programme) after the reading strategy interventions.

Figure 8.19: Reading strategy pre- and post-test results

	EXTENDED 1ST YEAR STUDENTS		MAINSTREAM STUDENTS
	COLUMN A	COLUMN B	COLUMN C
NAME	PRE-TEST (25)	POST-TEST (25)	POST-TEST (25)
Edna	5	8	14
Andiswa	0	6	10
Pumlani	14	Absent	14
Thembie	Absent	15	15
Sibongile	13	15	14
Patrick	6	13	14
Lunga	14	15	10
Vilakazi	15	17	13
Melanie	18	18	16
Yasteel	20	Absent	17
Shikaar	15	21	7
Dhiren	20	19	12
Mean Score	12.7 (50.8%)	14.7 (58.8%)	13.0 (52%)
Standard Deviation	1.9	1.5	0.8

One student (Thembie) was absent for the pre-test and two students (Yasteel and Pumlani) were absent for the post-test. A comparison of Columns A and B shows that, in general, the students performed better in the post-test. Of the students who wrote the pre-test, three failed (Edna, Andiswa and Patrick), one of whom (Andiswa) scored a '0'. Andiswa and Edna also failed the post-test, despite there being an improvement in their scores. Andiswa's score went up from 0 in the pre-test to 6 (24%) in the post-test while Edna improved by scoring 5 (20%) in the pre-test to 8 (32%) in the post-test. The 3rd student (Patrick) showed a great improvement from attaining 6 (24%) in the pre-test to 13 (52%) in the post-test. As indicated earlier on, these three students were identified as being the weakest students in the class. Shikaar, was another student who showed marked improvement in the post-test, his score rising from 15 (60%) in the pre-test to 21 (84%). Only one student, Dhiren, showed a small regression in performance from 20 (80%) to 19 (76%). Given his high scores in both tests, he is probably a student who did not require the reading strategy interventions.

A comparison of the post-test results in Columns B and C of Figure 8.19 makes very interesting reading. The mainstream students, whose scores are reflected in Column C,

are by their very definition students who have been accepted directly into the first year programme and therefore are expected to be better prepared for tertiary education than the students in the foundation programme. Yet, their mean score of 13.0 (52%) in Column C is lower than that attained by the foundation students (mean score 14.7 [58.8%]). Also, given that the mean score of the foundation students in the pre-test was 12.7 (50.8%), one may conclude: i) that the reading strategy interventions have been successful in that they have produced an improvement in the performance of the foundation level students, and ii) the level of improvement is such that the foundation students have performed better than the mainstream students in the post-test. The results of the TELP pre-and post-tests are presented in Figure 8.20.

Figure 8.20: Results of TELP pre-and post-test

	Name	Pre-test			Post-test		
		MCQs 49 marks	Sentences 51marks	Total 100 marks	MCQs 49 marks	Sentences 51 marks	Total 100 marks
1	Edna	24	11	35	25	18	43
2	Andiswa	16	0	16	16	1	17
3	Pumlani	33	22	55	35	25	60
4	Thembe	30	25	55	34	23	57
5	Sibongile	31	20	51	33	22	55
6	Patrick	22	6	28	22	14	36
7	Lunga	30	22	52	36	22	58
8	Vilakazi	40	24	64	35	23	58
9	Melanie	30	26	56	39	31	70
10	Yasteel	39	31	70	39	32	71
11	Shikaar	44	33	77	Absent		
12	Dhiren	42	40	82	45	38	83
Mean Score		31.8	21.7	53.4	32.6	22.6	55.3
Standard Deviation		5.6			5.4		

In drawing comparisons between the results in the pre- and post-tests, it is important to note that the pre-test was conducted under strict Technikon examination conditions in which the students wrote the test with other students. On the other hand, the post-test was restricted to the twelve students as a class test. The students' performance in the pre-test has been discussed earlier on in Chapter 6. Of particular note is the fact that

the students perform better in the MCQs than in the sentence construction sections of the test. The students find it more difficult to 'produce' language by writing as compared to selecting in the MCQs. This pattern also is reflected in the post-test results in Figure 8.20 above. While the mean scores of the different columns do not show a notable improvement in the post-test, individual students, in particular the weaker ones, performed much better in the post-test. For example, in the cases of Edna and Patrick, although they failed both tests, their overall performances improved from 35% to 43% and from 28% to 36%, respectively. What is notable, is the improvement in the sentence construction section, with Edna's scores rising from 11 (22%) in the pre-test to 18 (35%) in the post-test. Similarly, Patrick's score improved from 6 (12%) in the pre-test to 14 (27%) in the post-test. There is negligible change in Andiswa's performance. She was one of those who struggled to cope throughout the reading strategy interventions. Moreover, she struggled with the other subjects for which she was registered. She was also very reluctant to participate in classroom activities. In her particular case, despite seeking assistance from lecturers outside the classroom she was not able to cope with any of her courses. Her level of preparedness for tertiary education appeared to be highly inadequate.

Of the students who passed the pre-test, the greater improvement was shown by those who scored between 51% to 56% in the pre-test. The most notable improvement was that of Melanie who went from a score of 56% in the pre-test to 70% in the post-test. A notable regression in performance was that of Vilakazi who dropped from 64% in the pre-test to 58% in the post-test, due primarily to an underperformance in the MCQs. A possible reason is that he may not have been as focused in the post-test as in the (examination condition) pre-test. The overall assessment is that the students have performed better in the post-test.

The results of both the reading strategy and TELP pre-and post-tests indicate that the students perform better in the post-tests. In general, the reading strategy interventions have not only improved the students' awareness of and use of the target reading strategies and, invariably, their reading comprehension, but also their overall language proficiency. In particular, the results for the TELP pre-and post-tests show a notable improvement in sentence construction (that is, in producing language) in the post-test. The implication of this is that reading strategy interventions not only improve reading

comprehension, as noted from the results of the reading strategy pre-and post tests, but also the students' writing abilities in producing language as measured in the TELP tests. Having discussed in this section the results of the reading strategy and TELP pre-and post-tests, I reflect on the pedagogical process in the concluding section of this chapter.

8.7 Reflections

Generally, the students who participated in the action research project did so with much enthusiasm and interest. They seemed to enjoy the balance between individual efforts and working collaboratively in pairs and groups. They were willing to participate in the activities and to complete the associated tasks. The exception was Andiswa, who because of her feelings of inadequacy was always reluctant to participate. Shikaar also at times seemed very disinterested and his attendance was very erratic. He came across as being a "reluctant" learner. In my conversations with him I learnt that he was unhappy with the Dental Technology course and was thinking of deregistering²⁹.

In practice, the weekly timetable of the intervention programme presented a problem. Lessons were held on a Wednesday and a Thursday. I found that because of the workload in other disciplines, the students were not able to fully complete tasks given on Wednesday for the next day's lesson. Furthermore, in the last few lessons attendance began to drop. The reason for this is that the last few weeks of the reading strategy programme coincided with mid-term examinations and students chose to focus on the latter.

In designing the reading strategy interventions, several paragraphs were used which were lifted out of discipline related text. While these paragraphs were meaningful to students as they related to their assignment on infection control, they did present some difficulty to the weaker students who, because of their poor reading skills, were not able to make links and connections between the sentences in a 'stand alone' paragraph. For example, in Paragraph 13 which is presented below, some students were not able to connect between "If symptoms develop..." in the first sentence with "This unrecognizable infection with HBV ..." in the last sentence.

Figure 8.21: Paragraph 13

Paragraph 13:

If symptoms develop after infection, they begin to appear approximately 2.5 to 6 months after exposure. Roughly one third of those infected exhibit the more easily recognizable symptoms of yellowing of the skin (jaundice) and whites of the eyes, light-colored stools, dark urine, joint pain, fever, a rash, and itching. Approximately another one third develop less descript mild symptoms that may include malaise ("not feeling good"), loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain. The other one-third develop no symptoms at all. Thus two-thirds of all those infected develop no symptoms or have mild non-descript symptoms that are often unrecognized as being related to hepatitis. Yet symptomatic and asymptomatic cases can spread the virus to others. This unrecognizable infection with HBV and with other viruses (such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), serves as the basis for universal precautions – applying infection control procedures during care for all patients not just for those who are known to be infected (Miller and Palenik 1998: 59).

On reflecting on the homework exercises given to students, these were corrected in class by a call out of answers. It would have been more beneficial if each student was given the opportunity to model, while 'thinking aloud', the process demonstrated in 'modelling' session.

In conclusion, in this chapter the action research component of the study was discussed with a focus on three reading strategies, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, guessing the meaning of words using context clues, and summarization. The three strategies were initially taught independently and then in combination through a process involving explanation (by the lecturer), modelling (by the lecturer), practice (by the student) and transfer (to the student). A pre-test (prior to the reading strategy intervention) and a post-test (after the reading strategy intervention) were conducted in an attempt to assess the success of the interventions. Reflective pieces from the students after each part of the intervention programme also provided feedback on the success/failure of the interventions.

The reflective pieces from the students for the teaching of the three individual as well as the combined reading strategies were all positive, indicating that the students found them beneficial³⁰. This was confirmed by the results of the reading strategy pre-and

²⁹ Shikaar did eventually deregister and registered in the Faculty of Commerce.

³⁰ While it is acknowledged that this response should not be surprising in a situation where a lecturer is attempting to assist a group of relatively weak, disempowered students, I must point out that I had a very good rapport with the students to the extent that they openly expressed their views, be they negative or positive.

post-tests for the foundation students. The students performed better in the post-test, which was assessed by two independent academics as being more difficult than the pre-test. Moreover, the foundation students performed better in the post-test than mainstream students, who did not participate in the intervention programme, but only wrote the reading strategy post-test for purposes of comparison. The students also performed better in the TELP post-test. In particular, the students showed improvement in sentence construction. Thus, it would appear that the reading strategy interventions enhanced the students' ability to write in producing language.

This section brings to an end the presentation of the findings from the action research project. In Chapter 9, overall conclusions are presented.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING, LEARNING, AND FURTHER RESEARCH

CHAPTER 9: REFLECTIONS ON READING IN RELATION TO WRITING DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Introduction

The study undertaken in this thesis is novel in the sense that it is a radical departure from traditional pedagogy. It is a holistic approach that highlights the importance of the students' worlds in understanding how to address reading and writing literacy, working towards improvement by using what students have or do not have to design a reading intervention. Moreover, it also highlights the importance of the use of integrated disciplinary content with an explicit focus on reading development. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for integrated reading and writing activities in enhancing reading comprehension.

Due to the diversity and under-preparedness of many South African students who enter tertiary education (*c.f.* Chapter 1) and, given that reading is fundamental to the learning process, this study posed questions about the reading attitudes and practices of students in higher education, thus necessitating an ethnographic inquiry into students' worlds and practices. In particular, the study asked the questions: what are the students' attitudes and practices towards reading? and, do students' histories of reading have an influence on their reading abilities? These questions also provided an indication of the extent to which the students' home literacies interface with the academic literacy norms of higher education. Issues such as the students' approaches to learning, their motivation and language abilities were also considered. Since reading and writing are complementary processes (*c.f.* Chapter 3) that should not be taught in isolation of each other, it also was essential to investigate the students' attitudes and practices towards writing (or what I have termed "students' worlds"). Hence, the question "what are the students' attitudes and practices towards writing?"

Using the ideological model, and in particular, the New Literacy Approach to teaching and learning as a framework of the thesis (*c.f.* Chapter 2), I argued that the students' early childhood and schooling experiences of reading and writing impact on their current attitudes and practices. I further argued that for children from disadvantaged backgrounds learning and retaining literacy is more difficult than for children coming from advantaged, middle class backgrounds. In this thesis then, academic literacy is

considered from the perspective of a set of cultural understandings to which students are expected to conform, as well as the cultural understandings which they bring into the classroom context.

Based on my research, as well as the findings of other researchers¹, I argued that reading strategy interventions are essential in order to raise awareness and use of reading strategies so as to enhance the learning (reading) process. Hence, the question “Does the teaching of reading strategies enhance reading comprehension?” was posed (*c.f.* Chapters 1 and 5). The review of literature on reading development (*c.f.* Chapters 2, 3, and 4) and the findings from the interviews (*c.f.* Chapters 6 and 7) indicate that the explicit teaching of reading strategies is essential for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (Heath 1983, Delpit 1986, Cope and Kalantzis 1993). To this end an integrated action research project was designed whereby three reading strategies were taught explicitly to students, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words in a text, and summarizing. The process which was used to make explicit the methods of reading used by students is discussed in detail in Chapter 8, where the teaching of reading strategies was shown to enhance the students’ reading comprehension and motivation to read.

In this concluding Chapter I recapitulate and reflect on the findings of the research. In doing so, these findings are contextualized within the key questions that were framed in Chapter 1. The limitations of the study are then acknowledged in order to show that while this study attempted to enhance reading comprehension through integrated reading and writing activities, in particular, through the teaching of reading strategies, it does not provide all the answers on reading comprehension development. Finally, this research, while attempting to address the key questions in the thesis also raises additional concerns and issues that may be of use for further research.

¹ For example, Duffy and Roehler (1987), Urquhart and Weir (1998), Grabe (1991), Hayes (1991) and Pressley *et al.* (1995).

9.2 A summary of and reflections on the findings

9.2.1 *Reading attitudes and practices*

The main argument as drawn from Chapter 6 is that students do not value reading. In general, it is found that the students engaged in very little reading outside of the academic environment, primarily focusing on discipline specific material for the completion of assignments. Reading for pleasure is a rare, if not foreign, practice. A reason cited by most of the students for this was a lack of time to read material apart from the texts related to their studies. Nonetheless, the majority of the students indicated that they enjoyed 'light' reading. On inquiry, this was restricted to popular magazines for most. A common practice was for students to skim through a magazine or a newspaper if a copy was available and concentrate on an article that caught their attention.

In a survey using sixty-two students from the Faculty of Health Science, only 35% of the students indicated that they read on a daily basis, with some 25% reading only once a week. The others indicated that they read two or three times a week, once a month or when they were bored or found the time. The relatively small percentage of students who read daily is cause for concern as the demands of tertiary education necessitates reading outside the classroom to supplement lecture notes or handouts. This was confirmed in the interviews when the majority of students revealed that they consulted minimally with the reading material recommended by their lecturers. Again, this is disconcerting as some of the students answered assignments using the class notes as the only source of material. While others did consult additional texts, these occasions were few and far between – merely to complete an assignment. Significantly, only two of the twelve students who participated in the study indicated that they engaged in additional reading to improve their understanding of the subject matter². It must be noted that in the interviews students reported that they found their textbooks difficult to read and understandably so, because expository texts are by their very nature more complex. This point is supported by researchers, for example, Perera (1984) and Langer (1986), who report that children experience more difficulty in both producing and processing expository texts than narrative texts. In the South African context,

² Studies in South Africa, for example, Macdonald (1990), Van Rooyen (1990) and, Pretorius (2002) have reported similar findings.

Macdonald (1990) and Pretorius (2002) argue that expository texts are often conceptually dense and cover topics and issues that are often not within the students' frame of reference. Students further reported that they generally experienced problems with understanding and retaining the scientific terminology used in their discipline. Vygotsky (1986) argues that scientific concepts are abstract and systematic, often reaching beyond the students' immediate experiences. Therefore, I argued in this thesis that these concepts need to be explicitly explained to students and continually reinforced. To this end, I argued for the explicit teaching of the use of context clues in order to decipher the meaning of unknown words that are encountered in a text during reading.

Students' responses to a questionnaire-based inquiry into their goals for reading fell into three broad categories: educational goals, casual reading, and practical reasons. The responses were dominated by educational goals, in particular to increase information/knowledge (56.45%). The category casual reading was dominated by relaxation/pleasure (32.25%), while world/current issues (20.96%) was the dominant feature of the category practical reading. On further investigating, the students confirmed that reading for educational purposes was done mostly under pressure, for example, when completing an assignment. Once again, they cited a lack of time for little or no casual and practical reasons for reading. From the above-mentioned feedback from the students one may conclude that the students only read under compulsion and that little or no value is placed on reading.

The fact that the students engaged in very little voluntary reading, raises questions about their levels of motivation. This, coupled to the practice of reading only when compelled to do so (most often in completing assignments), seems to suggest that the students are only extrinsically motivated to read. In such situations, the challenge facing educators is to shift students from a performance orientation (where the focus is on completion of a task instead of understanding and enjoying reading, therefore extrinsic motivation) to a task-mastery orientation (desire to improve reading skills and content understanding, therefore an intrinsic motivation)(*c.f.* Chapter 6).

9.2.2 *Students' histories of reading*

As discussed above, the students in this thesis read primarily to enhance their performance in assignments and examinations and not for pleasure or understanding. This finding necessitated an investigation of the students' background and early life experiences, in particular, the family attitude and practices towards reading, childhood memories of reading, school experiences of reading, and the students' perspectives of reading. It was argued in Chapter 6 (*c.f.* Section 6.4) that the students' early literacy events play a major role in determining their later educational success (Wells 1986) and that the norms of how and why to read, write, speak, and listen are socially constructed (Heath 1983). Hence, it was necessary to understand and provide information on the reading and writing behaviours that typify the particular families from which the students come. In doing so one may pose the question: Were the students' experiences such that reading for 'pleasure' was not considered as an activity?

Drawing on the work of Heath (1983), Delpit (1986), and various works by Street (1993, 1998, 2003) and Gee (1996, 1997, 2000), who suggest that literacy is not a skill, but a social practice that is embedded in the broader social, cultural and political contexts, two important factors emerged from the investigation of the students' childhood experiences of reading. First, the students' exposure to reading material was very limited. This could be attributed to the lower socio-economic status of the parents and that the purchasing of reading material is simply not a priority. Second, the students were not encouraged by their parents to read, as many parents had a limited education and were, therefore, not in a position to foster the importance of reading in their children, let alone the importance of reading in the learning process. Hence, it was argued that in many homes reading was not a valued activity, thus raising the question: How could parents foster an activity if they themselves perceived it to be of little value? McNaughton (1995:3) argues that although children make or construct meaning from their activities, these meanings are co-constructed from the cultural activities and guidance given by their parents or care-givers. In the case of the EAL students, the little value placed on reading may also be attributed to the fact that the students who participated in the intervention come primarily from an "oral cultural" background (*c.f.* Chapter 6). However, this was not applicable to all the EAL students as some could not remember being told, let alone read, any stories by their parents or care-givers. It would, therefore, appear that the oral culture of story telling seems to be fading away in today's highly

technological world. The EAL students in the intervention are further disadvantaged by the fact that while most come from homes with rich language and literacy practices, these practices are not valued in higher education. Because the indigenous cultures are not valued in higher education, many students begin to develop negative feelings towards their culture which they perceive as being inferior (Machet 2002). According to French (1988:125), the disappearance of a vibrant oral literature and the lack of respect for black cultural heritages may hinder the students' enjoyment and appreciation of literature in other languages. In addition, French (1988) argues that the printed word may seem pallid and boring in comparison to the density and rich reality of interpersonal language in black communities. In light of this, although motivation to read and learn may exist, it becomes difficult to sustain and develop without the vibrancy associated with the oral literature.

Within the schooling environment my findings show that although the students were exposed to learning to read, this exposure stopped either in Grade 3 or Grade 4. This situation is not unique to South African schools, but has also been reported by researchers in other countries, for example, Perera (1984) (*c.f.* Chapter 6, Section 6.4.3). Moreover, such research also shows the approach to teaching reading as being very restrictive. Students were taught by decoding, starting with the alphabet, then words, phrases, and sentences. The misconception by many educators is that once the student is able to decode words, then they will be able to read any text. It would seem that almost no attention is given to comprehension, as how well the student reads is equated with the students' recognition of words, fluency, and good pronunciation. As pointed out in Chapter 6, while decoding skills are necessary they are not sufficient for reading comprehension development (Cummins 2001, Pretorius 2002).

Although there is exposure in the secondary school curriculum to short stories, plays and novels, this is very limited. The main focus tends to be on "passing examinations", thereby generally leading to the transmission mode of teaching, rather than developing a student who is able to become an engaged reader. This situation is more prevalent in the ex-DET schools³ where students have been exposed to a great deal of transmission teaching (Clark 1993, Kapp 1998), resulting in memorization or rote learning. The

³ The DET (Department of Education and Training) was, under the apartheid government, responsible for the education of African students, and was disbanded after 1994.

transition from decoding to reading with comprehension through more sophisticated reading teaching techniques did not and cannot take place under such circumstance as students lack higher-level processing strategies (*c.f.* Chapter 3). The fact that many educators perceive reading as a leisure time activity does not assist in promoting the importance of academic reading in their students.

Given that reading was not taught at secondary school level, the students entered tertiary education without the opportunity to develop and master reading comprehension strategies. This was confirmed when investigating how students addressed difficulties in reading. The overwhelming response was through the use of a dictionary or by asking a friend. The use of sophisticated reading strategies was cited on just a few occasions. Researchers (Pressley *et al.* 1995, Taraban *et al.* 2000) argue that strategic readers make more use of reading strategies and are successful academically. This further emphasises the need for the explicit teaching of reading strategies. Having addressed the questions posed on the students' attitudes and practices of reading and the students' family background history of reading, the next section addresses the questions posed on writing.

9.2.3 *Students' histories of writing*

In Chapter 3, the importance of correlating reading and writing instruction (Loban 1963, Cooper 1986, Cobine 1995) was discussed at length. Searley (1996) argues that learning about how language is used often occurs at the interface between reading and writing and suggests that the linking of reading to writing through the use of model texts helps build children's awareness of how language is used in different contexts⁴. The ethnographic inquiry into the students' attitudes and practices of writing attempted to explore whether the link between reading and writing was made explicit to students by their parents and educators (*c.f.* Chapter 7). In summary, childhood recollections of the students show that the EFL students were taught to write by one of their parents. In the case of the EAL students, only a third were taught some form of writing by their parents prior to attending school. Generally, the writing involved copying letters of the alphabet, followed by a few simple words.

⁴ This view is supported by other researchers, for example, Beard (1984), Konopak *et al.* (1987), and Meek (1988).

The students' school experiences of writing revealed that writing was taught as a discrete skill, focusing primarily on improving hand writing, spelling, and punctuation. Writing as a means of comprehending text and of promoting familiarity with the format of written materials was not explored. This was highlighted in the students' recollections of secondary school experiences, where during comprehension lessons, the students were required to read a passage and provide answers to mainly literal questions. As has been argued by Pretorius (2002), this approach does not develop students' meaning-making skills. It has been further argued (McCormick 1992, Pretorius 2002) that inferencing is central to text comprehension. Poor readers experience greater difficulty with inferential questions than literal questions and yet it was found that, generally, many schools do not develop the strategies that would equip students in answering inferential questions let alone providing the necessary practice to acquire these strategies. Solarsh (2002:7) says that being limited by literal reasoning "places severe limitations on the extent to which meaning can be derived from text, and hence the extent to which children can use reading effectively as a strategy for learning".

The data that emanates from this thesis shows a consistent response from all twelve students: they were given no guidance nor taught how to write their assignments or mini-projects. Concepts such as "an introduction" or a "conclusion" were foreign to the students. Neither were the students taken through a multiple drafts process, in which constructive feedback from the educator was shown to develop the students' writing skills (*c.f.* Chapter 3). Even the marked assignment contained very little feedback for further/future improvement. On the basis of the above information it was concluded that writing was taught through a superficial process without any link being made between reading and writing activities. Each was viewed as an activity on its own.

9.2.4 Students' attitudes and their writing practices

Asked if they enjoyed writing, the majority of the students indicated that they enjoyed informal writing. Three of the students were very emphatic that they did not enjoy writing at all. However, very few of the students enjoyed formal writing related to their disciplines. Further investigation revealed that the students experienced difficulty in researching relevant information and structuring their assignments in the format required. This could be attributed to their lack of knowledge of the literacy norms and conventions of their disciplines. As pointed out in Chapter 7, Ballard and Clanchy

(1988:8) argue that the rules and conventions “are nowhere codified or written down, and yet they mediate crucially between the student’s own knowledge and intentions, and the knowledge and potential meanings that exist within the university”. The responses of the students who participated in the intervention for this thesis show that the norms and conventions are not made explicit to the students by their lecturers.

Motivation, is perhaps, the single most important factor in learning. With regards to motivation, it was found in the interviews that some of the students were not motivated to engage in independent writing, for example, writing their class notes in simple form so as to enable better understanding. In Chapter 7, possible reasons for this behaviour were given. It was also pointed out that this situation cannot be dismissed as simply being a case of “lack of motivation” on the part of the student, although it is the discourse that is frequently used by lecturers at DUT, for example. Socio-cultural factors and the students’ early childhood and school experiences also need to be taken into account. As argued throughout this thesis and stated by Pretorius (2002: vii) socio-cultural factors

ascribe meaning and value to the acts of reading and writing, to the situations in which reading and writing occur ...Reasons for becoming literate vary within and across cultures, and these reasons affect home, school, work and community literacy practices, the levels of literacy that are attained, the materials that are used for teaching literacy, and the institutional practices that are used for teaching literacy.

It was found that the socio-cultural factors did not prepare the students adequately in harnessing the students’ love for reading and reading to learn. According to Cummins (1985) the significant factor facilitating the development of BICS and CALP (*c.f.* Chapter 1) is an active and early engagement with literacy-related activities. Bernstein (1971:135), in his distinction between restricted and elaborated codes of language use, argues that in order to succeed in school it is critical that the student possess or become oriented towards an elaborated code. He further argues that children who are limited to a restricted code

will tend to develop essentially through the regulation inherent in the code. For such a child, speech does not become the object of special perceptual activity, neither does a theoretical attitude develop towards the structural possibilities of sentence organization. The speech is epitomized by a low-level and limiting syntactic organization and there is little motivation or orientation towards increasing vocabulary.

Throughout Chapters 6 and 7, it was shown that the EAL students in the study had limited exposure to the literacy-related activities that are valued in higher education. Further, the home literacy practices of many of the EAL students are not congruent to the literacy practices of DUT and in particular of their disciplines. Hence students experience difficulty in coping with the academic norms of reading and writing at higher education.

A possible consequence of the inadequate approach to writing development at secondary school level is that over half of the students in the survey at DUT experienced difficulty in writing assignments. It must be noted that, as discussed in Chapter 3, limited reading experiences can impact negatively on writing and that reading experiences may be as critical a factor in developing writing ability as writing instruction itself (Stotsky 1983). Therefore, this thesis argues for an integrated reading/writing approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum. The fact that students did not necessarily receive high marks in their assignments, also suggests that the lecturers are not paying adequate attention to the 'rules and conventions' of the discipline in preparing the students to answer the assignments. This was confirmed in the use of a questionnaire to obtain the lecturers' perspective of writing. Several of the lecturers indicated that they expected the students to have been taught the essentials of assignment/report writing before they entered tertiary education. While in general the lecturers supported the need to develop writing skills, they did not perceive the task being accomplished through integration with the curriculum, but as an external 'add on' to their disciplines. The use of rubrics (*c.f.* Chapter 7) in providing students with clear guidelines on the assignment/writing task is an unknown process for many of the lecturers at DUT. It must be noted that over the past two to three years CHED staff have been working closely with some lecturers at DUT on designing rubrics. However, these lecturers are few and usually the ones who are already innovative in their teaching methods.

A questionnaire survey of writing difficulties experienced by the primary group of twelve students as well as fifty other students from the Faculty of Health Science made interesting reading. The primary difficulty experienced was 'referencing sources' when writing assignments, followed by 'writing a conclusion to the assignment', then by 'expressing what you want to say clearly'. What emerges from the interviews is that lecturers do not emphasize the importance of referencing as a form of scholarly

supporting evidence. Yet referencing is an important reading skill in higher education as students are expected to read for integration, accuracy, and detail. Instead, referencing is seen as something to do to avoid plagiarism and students are instructed to reference. Consequently, referencing is undervalued in the eyes of the students and, therefore, given inadequate attention. The difficulties associated with referencing have been the subject of research (Thesen 1994, Angelil-Carter 1995, Hendricks and Quinn 2000). In particular, Hendricks and Quinn (2000) found that students experienced difficulties understanding relevant readings and integrating a quote or concept into their own writing. They advocate for the teaching of reading strategies to assist students become better readers. The problems students experienced in “expressing themselves clearly” could be linked directly to their limited vocabulary. The importance of vocabulary knowledge for reading comprehension was discussed in Chapters 4 and 8. To recapitulate, Kilfoil (1998:36) argues that “vocabulary is an important factor in understanding what we read or hear on the one hand, and of saying or writing precisely what we mean, on the other”. Researchers, for example Nelson-Heber (1986), Beck *et al.* (1987), Nagy (1988) and Droop and Verhoeven (2003), have also shown that vocabulary knowledge does contribute to academic success.

Having addressed the questions posed on the development of reading and writing, the next section evaluates the reading strategy interventions designed for this study.

9.2.5 Reading strategy interventions: have they been successful?

An issue of paramount importance in this thesis is reading comprehension, and the importance of teaching reading strategies to improve reading comprehension was discussed in Chapter 4. The findings of the ethnographic inquiry, as discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7, showed that students were not reading enough, and were reading at a level well below that expected of them in higher education, thus necessitating the raising of awareness of reading strategies as well as a more explicit approach to the teaching of reading strategies. Researchers (Heath 1983, Cope and Kalantzis 2000) also suggest the explicit teaching of strategies in order to properly equip students for academic reading and writing at tertiary level, thus reinforcing the need for reading strategy interventions.

The teaching of reading strategies to the selected group of participants was implemented through an action research project described in Chapter 8. Action research, which is both flexible and adaptable to any classroom situation, allowed for reflection in practice in order to improve teaching and learning. In the process, the three selected reading strategies, namely, identifying the main idea in a paragraph, using context clues to guess the meaning of words in the context, and summarizing, were taught independently using the explicit explanation approach which involved an explanation, modeling (using the think-aloud protocol), practice, and transfer exercises. Thereafter, the students were taught to use the three strategies simultaneously, using the cognitive apprenticeship approach. As discussed in Chapter 8, these reading strategies were identified by lecturers (on the basis of students' writing) as those that presented students with most difficulty. Discipline specific material was used in designing the interventions. In analyzing the impact of the interventions, the instruments used included a reading strategy pre- and a post-test, worksheets, writing tasks, and student portfolio. TELP pre- and post-tests were used to assess the influence of the reading strategy interventions on the language proficiency of the students.

For the teaching of all three reading strategies positive feedback was received from students as discussed in Chapter 8. The lessons involved not only individual tasks, but also pair and group work with myself as facilitator while drawing on students' strengths and bringing them closer together, at the same time moving most of the students from being passive to active participants in the lessons. The interviews lead to a greater sensitivity to individual student needs. Both these factors thus created a classroom environment that facilitated student participation, as well as the negotiating and renegotiating of meaning during the lessons.

A comparison of the results for the reading strategy pre- and post-tests revealed that the students performed notably better in the post-test than in the pre-test (*c.f.* Figure 8.19). What was even more remarkable was that in the reading strategy post-test, the participating group of students on the extended programme who, as indicated in Chapter 5, did not satisfy the minimum requirements for entry into the mainstream curricula, performed better than a control group of mainstream students who wrote only the reading strategy post-test (*c.f.* Figure 8.20). For the twelve students a similar pattern was observed in the two TELP tests, namely, the students performed better in the TELP

post-test with a marked improvement in sentence construction. Therefore, these results suggest that the reading strategy interventions have been highly successful. The interventions improved the students' awareness and use of the selected reading strategies and, therefore, their reading comprehension. Moreover, the TELP pre- and post-tests showed an improvement in the students' language proficiency as their writing abilities in producing language were enhanced. These results stress the need for the teaching of reading strategies through integrated reading and writing activities.

It must be noted that the above findings may be constrained by the limitations placed on the study. These limitations are discussed next.

9.3 Limitations of the study

While I have provided some suggestions concerning the questions posed for this research project, I acknowledge that this study is not without shortcomings or limitations. First, the primary participants in this research were the twelve Dental Technology students. This is a small sample. Conducting this research with students on other extended first year programmes would have been the ideal as comparisons could be made between the different groups. Moreover, there would have been more room for interaction and reflection on the pedagogical process if other academic development lecturers had been involved in taking their students through the scaffolded process of teaching the selected reading strategies as described in Chapter 8. However, I did not possess the resources to conduct the intervention with other groups. Furthermore, since discipline-specific materials were used, it was not possible to get other lecturers involved in the reading strategy intervention process.

Second, the action research intervention was designed over a period of eleven weeks. It so happened that the latter part of the interventions coincided with major tests. Attendance by students in the academic literacy course began to drop and became erratic and as such I had to rely on feedback of a few students, who in retrospect, had more to gain from the lessons than the other students as they were usually the weaker students in the class. The part of the intervention that involved the teaching of the combined reading strategies was most affected by poor attendance, yet it was the part that I consider most important as students need to be able to use multiple strategies simultaneously. It must be noted that after the eleven weeks intervention period, during

the academic literacy lessons, regular mention was made of the use of reading strategies, in particular the three strategies that were taught. This served not only to reinforce what was learnt, but was also for the benefit of students who missed lessons.

Third, as discussed in Chapter 8, and mentioned earlier in this section, all examples of exercises were designed using discipline specific materials related to a major Dental Technology assignment. It was intended that the mainstream lecturer who set the assignment would provide feedback on the students' performance in the assignment. This did not happen as the lecturer went on study leave and a replacement part-time lecturer assessed the assignments. Unfortunately, she was not able to comment on the students' performance or individual progress.

In the designing of some of the exercises, paragraphs were borrowed from texts. As discussed in Chapter 8, some of these paragraphs created a problem for the weaker students as they were not able to contextualize the paragraphs leading to difficulty in completing the tasks at hand.

Fourth, the timetable was such that I saw the students on a Wednesday and Thursday. The intervention programme was designed such (*c.f.* Chapter 5) that a reading strategy was taught on a Wednesday with homework exercises being given to be completed for the lesson on Thursday. Students did not always complete their homework because of priority given to their other subjects. This once again points to the fact that the schooling system has created students that are more performance driven, that is, extrinsically motivated (*c.f.* Chapter 6) and not task driven. And then, unsurprisingly, greater value is placed on tasks for which they are assessed. In retrospect, I believe that the interventions would have worked better if they were spread out throughout the academic year, rather than being conducted over eleven successive weeks. While, initially, students were very interested and motivated, as lessons progressed it became more difficult to sustain their motivation towards the end of the semester. Furthermore, spreading the intervention over the entire year would have also allowed for more intensive feedback on individual students' homework exercises.

Finally, in order to get a clearer assessment of the students' language proficiency in their mother-tongue, the reading strategy pre- and post-tests could have been designed in

students' mother-tongue as well. These results would have been helpful in that they would have indicated the extent to which the students' academic difficulties are as a result of their limited proficiency in the English language which is the medium of instruction. This result would have been particularly useful for the weaker students (Andiswa, Pumlanj and Edna) (*c.f.* Chapter 8).

The findings and limitations discussed thus far give rise to recommendations for further practice and research and implications for the study which are discussed in the sections to follow.

9.4 Recommendations for further practice and research

This discussion begins by considering, first, the family where the early years of the child are moulded. Second, the school as a social institution which plays an important role in either fostering or failing to support the literacy development of the student is considered, and, third, I consider recommendations for implementation in higher education.

9.4.1 The role of the family in promoting academic literacy

In Chapter 1 I discussed the low literacy levels among school-goers in South Africa. The findings of the ethnographic interviews (*c.f.* Chapters 6 and 7) show that many EAL students come from disadvantaged backgrounds with minimal or no family support during the child's educational development. Machet (2002:10) argues that one of the most successful strategies used in improving literacy in disadvantaged communities, both South Africa and in overseas, is family literacy⁵. While recognizing the benefit of family literacy programmes, they nevertheless have been subjected to some degree of criticism (Auerbach 1995, Hendrix 1999). Auerbach (1995:645) argues that family literacy programmes are based on a deficiency model⁶. In this thesis it has been argued that students bring with them culture specific literacy practices and ways of knowing (*c.f.* Chapters 6 and 7) and, therefore, I suggest that in any family literacy programme these should be taken cognisance of, for example, by building on the interactional patterns and cultural norms of the families. Therefore, it is recommended that for greater impact and

⁵ Based on the assumption that parents are the child's first and most influential educators, family literacy programmes attempt to improve the literacy of educationally disadvantaged children (Tett and Crowther 1998:450).

⁶ In this model parents are seen as deficient in some way, and because of parents' incorrect literacy attitudes and practices, their children perform badly in school.

“buy-in” by parents, family literacy programmes should be culturally appropriate, targeting not only one parent in the family, but as many members in the family as possible. In other words, and in agreement with Auerbach (1995:652), these programmes should not only be informed by participants’ belief and practices, but should also incorporate culturally familiar and relevant content. Furthermore, family literacy projects should not merely be viewed as “filling a vacuum”, but should, instead, be viewed as augmenting what is already there (Mayfield 1999:92). Within the South African context there is a need for greater government involvement in the programmes in terms of funding in order to reach larger areas and a wider population, in particular rural communities. Family literacy programmes are essential as it would lead to greater parental involvement in the child’s learning and as discussed in Chapter 6, early parental involvement in the child’s learning would facilitate the development of BICS to CALP. Apart from the family, the school plays an important role in the development of the students’ literacy practices. Recommendations relating to the school are presented next.

9.4.2 The role of the school in students’ academic literacy development.

From the review of the relevant literature and the findings of the study it is evident that many students entering higher education are not prepared for the demands of tertiary education. The ethnographic interviews and action research intervention reveal that reading and writing are taught as discreet skills usually only in the lower grades with little or no emphasis on reading in the secondary grades. It is, therefore, recommended that the National Department of Education put into place an explicit integrated reading and writing policy that begins on entrance into school and which is sustained at varying levels across all grades up to Grade 12. The sustaining of the policy should include aspects such as the provision of adequate resources⁷, educator training⁸, and refresher courses⁹, as well as monitoring and evaluation procedures. Policies may be put in place, but if these are not implemented and monitored then there is always the possibility that they will not be adhered to. To cater for the under-preparedness of the successful Grade 12 student, higher education institutions need to establish appropriate support programmes as discussed in the next section.

⁷ For example, books in the different languages to foster reading for pleasure.

⁸ To assist the educator in designing integrated reading/writing activities.

⁹ That will emphasize the importance of reading and ways to enhance reading comprehension.

9.4.3 Promotion of academic literacy in higher education institutions

In higher education, it is recommended that the teaching of reading and writing be integrated into the curriculum within the various disciplines. I am therefore advocating changes in the curricula. Since this is not a task that can be accomplished quickly, in the interim it is recommended that the explicit teaching of reading strategies using an integrated reading/writing approach be included into existing academic development programmes. In addition, literacy development should become the primary task of staff development so that educators are made aware of the role academic literacy acquisition plays in students' success. Staff also can be assisted in fostering the development of academic literacies in the subjects they teach by helping them to make explicit what they want their students to do and what they want their students to know. Moore (1998:93) argues that "a key strategy of academic development work is to inform the understanding of academic staff so that they are increasingly equipped to respond to the needs of student diversity". In addition, through staff development staff should be given the necessary support during their own acquisition and critique of academic literacies. To this end academic development practitioners could conduct workshops for staff on the use of integrated reading/writing activities. Although workshops do reach a wider group more quickly, from my experience workshops are not as effective as team teaching. Therefore, in addition to workshops it is also recommended that academic development practitioners work closely with mainstream lecturers, for example, by team teaching, to show them how integrated reading/writing tasks can be included into their curriculum¹⁰. Furthermore, and also from experience with working with various academic Departments, while there are a few enthusiastic lecturers there are others who simply are not open to change. To this end, it is recommended that higher education institutions develop institutional reading and writing policies as soon as possible. Commitment by management is necessary in order to provide the necessary infrastructure and staffing which would enable students to become engaged and empowered students.

¹⁰ This approach is to a certain extent in agreement with Rose (online), who argues that the sequential approach to reading development [home reading → (preparing for) → primary school → (preparing for) → secondary school → (preparing for) → tertiary level] is not enough. While students are taught at a particular level the skills required for the next level, it is claimed that these skills are not explicitly taught within the relevant level in a manner that is needed by the students. In the proposed Learning to Read: Reading to Learn programme (Rose, online), the required reading and writing skills are taught at each level of the education sequence.

As shown in this thesis, there also is a need for lecturers at DUT to become aware of the norms and values underpinning their ways of being. Therefore, I concur with Zuber-Skerritt (1992) and Rowland (2000) and argue for educational research as a mode of transmission by discipline specialists. Through research in literacy studies, educators can begin to question traditional pedagogy. It is only through the questioning of the discourses of the institution, and the various disciplines, that issues can be addressed and challenged. Furthermore, through research educators would understand the importance of making explicit the norms and conventions of their discipline to students. In this way, rather than instructing their students on the conventions of, for example, referencing, educators would be able to teach “students how to know, how to justify their knowledge, and how to structure it – in short, how to read and write – [which] is really more important” (Taylor 1988:64).

Apart from the findings of the study providing directions for improving academic literacy, they also inform implications for further research on the development of reading comprehension through integrated reading and writing activities.

9.5 Implications for further research

Because of the under-preparedness and the diversity of students entering higher education in South Africa (*c.f.* Chapter 1), as well as the neglect of the importance of reading in many homes, schools and in higher education, the research possibilities into reading, in particular the teaching of reading strategies through integrated reading/writing activities, are vast. For example, this study, taking account of the limitations mentioned above, could be replicated for future Dental Technology students. The action research process used during the interventions could be contextually located within any discipline using relevant discipline specific materials. The evidence for this is provided by the facts that the project was trialled successfully, using students from the Department of Somatology and thereafter successfully implemented using students from the Department of Dental Technology as participants. In addition, a variety of other reading strategies could be included, for example, inferencing, and text structure analysis, in a programme structured over the academic year.

In this thesis it was pointed out that because of the students’ lack of exposure to reading materials in their mother-tongue many of the participants in this study had not fully

developed reading strategies in their mother-tongue. To this end, the development of reading through the teaching of reading strategies also could be done in the mother-tongue. This would be extremely beneficial for students as the reading strategies they learn in their mother-tongue could transfer to their additional languages and, in particular, during the reading of English texts.

The fact that students enter higher education not only with limited reading experiences and strategies, but also with limited writing experiences and strategies, suggest that an integrated pedagogy as to the explicit teaching of both reading and writing be developed. This could be done as part of a 'language across the curriculum approach' in access programme modules as well as in first year modules in higher education institutions.

9.6 Reflections

This study on the development of reading comprehension demonstrates that integrated reading strategy interventions do enhance the students' literacy development and do empower students by making them engaged readers, thereby allowing them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. However, it does not claim to have solutions to all the literacy related difficulties among school-goers in South Africa. Nonetheless, this thesis can make a valuable contribution to the literacy development of students in South Africa in many ways, both locally and nationally. In particular, students both in school and at tertiary level can benefit from the reading strategy interventions. The study also provides educators (at school and in higher education) with resources for the understanding of the socially constructed nature of academic literacies as well as detailed descriptions of the intervention process which can be adapted to suit the needs of students. This study also has potential for international researchers by focusing their attention on the literacy context among school-goers in South Africa, as well as by linking such attention to an understanding of the socio-economic factors and cultural backgrounds of many EAL students in South Africa. As such it allows for comparative studies with other multilingual and multicultural contexts.

In this thesis I have shown that within the South African context reading has been a neglected field, the effect of which is the negative impact on the literacy levels of students who enter school and higher education. This, in turn, impacts negatively on the economy as a whole. There is no quick-fix solution to this situation. While interventions

may be put into place successfully, it must be noted that, as Taylor (1988) argues, literacy is attained by degrees suggesting the need for a variety of interventions in the overall development of the students' academic literacy practices. This point is reinforced by Auerbach (1995) who argues that it is not one single practice that will encourage literacy acquisition in a child. Rather, literacy acquisition is promoted by the exposure to a range of literacy practices that are integrated in meaningful ways into the fabric of the daily life of the child. In taking account of the recommendations made above, the success of the family literacy programmes will eventually filter into the schools where appropriate interventions will better prepare the student entering higher education. While there may not be immediate gains, the long term benefits would be enormous.

Finally, my thesis emphasizes the urgency of addressing reading in South African schools and higher education. As Pretorius (2002:194) argues, "the longer the reading problem is ignored, the more the intellectual potential of current and future generations of students goes untapped". The challenge, therefore, is to find creative ways to use the languages and diverse experiences students bring to the classroom as a resource in developing their academic literacies and scholarly performance.

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Appendix 1**Consent to participate in research study and to publication of results.**

Dear Student

Please read the information below before deciding whether you are interested in participating in this research project.

1. I understand that Ms. S. Bharuthram is conducting research on reading and writing. She is trying to find out students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing. She is also interested in family attitudes and practices towards reading and writing.
2. I have been asked to participate in this research study. I understand that I will be interviewed approximately four times and the interviews will be tape-recorded.
3. I accept that the results of this research study will be used towards a Doctoral degree through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the results may (at a later stage) be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals.
4. I understand that my real name will not be used in any report emanating from the research study.
5. I agree to participate in the research study, but I understand that I can withdraw my agreement to participate at any time without any obligations if I so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

Questionnaire to ascertain students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing

Dear Student

I am conducting a study the aim of which is to help students improve their reading and writing. Please assist by filling in this questionnaire as honestly as possible. All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Please give detailed answers, elaborating (as much as possible) wherever necessary.

First Name :

Gender : _____

Diploma : _____

Surname :

Age : _____

Matric language symbols : English :

Englisch : _____
Zulu : _____

Afrikaans :

Other Languages : _____

Please specify your : first language : _____

second language : _____

third language (if any) : _____

Part I : Reading

Section A

1. Describe some specific reasons (goals) a person might have for reading :

2. What are some of the things that you do if you are having difficulty understanding what you are reading?

Section C : Survey of Reading Strategies

6. All the items below refer to your reading of Technikon-related academic materials. Each statement is followed by five numbers, 1,2,3,4, and 5, and each number has the following meaning:

'1' means that 'I **never** do this'.

'2' means that 'I do this **only occasionally**'. (About 25% of the time)

'3' means that 'I **sometimes** do this'. (About 50% of the time)

'4' means that 'I **usually** do this'. (About 75% of the time)

'5' means that 'I **always** do this'.

After reading each statement, **circle the number** (1,2,3,4, or 5) which applies to you. Note that there are no right or wrong responses to any of the items on this survey. Do not circle more than one number.

Statement	Never					Always				
1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
4. I scan the text to see what it is about before reading it.	1	2	3	4	5					
5. When the text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	1	2	3	4	5					
7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5					
8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation.	1	2	3	4	5					
9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	1	2	3	4	5					
10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	1	2	3	4	5					
11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5					
12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	1	2	3	4	5					
13. I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
14. When a text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5					
15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in the text to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5					
16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5					
17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5					
18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
19. I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
20. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	1	2	3	4	5					
21. I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	2	3	4	5					
22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	1	2	3	4	5					
23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	1	2	3	4	5					
24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	1	2	3	4	5					
25. When text a becomes difficult, I reread it to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5					
26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	1	2	3	4	5					
27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	1	2	3	4	5					
28. When I read I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5					
29. When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	1	2	3	4	5					
30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5					

Part II : Writing

7. Do you enjoy writing in general (e.g. creative writing, letters to friends, etc?)

Please tick : Yes No
☐ ☐

8a. Do you enjoy writing tasks/assignments in your discipline?

Please tick : Yes No
☐ ☐

b. If no, please state the reason: _____

9. Please indicate how much difficulty you have with each of the following in your written work:

'H' means 'Lots of difficulty'

'M' means 'Some difficulty'

'L' means 'Very Little Difficulty'

'N' means 'No Difficulty'

Please circle the appropriate letter

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| a. Using appropriate vocabulary. | H | M | L | N |
| b. Expressing what you want to say clearly. | H | M | L | N |
| c. Arranging and developing your written work. | H | M | L | N |
| d. Writing an introduction to your assignment. | H | M | L | N |
| e. Understanding the assignment/task question. | H | M | L | N |
| f. Writing a conclusion to your assignment. | H | M | L | N |
| g. Referencing your sources. | H | M | L | N |
| h. Understanding the subject matter. | H | M | L | N |

i. Please specify any other difficulties you experience when writing in your discipline:

10. When writing an assignment do you engage in the writing of drafts and redrafts before submitting your final assignment ?

Please tick: Never Occasionally Sometimes Often
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Thank you for your assistance

Appendix 3

Questionnaire to ascertain lecturers' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing in their discipline

Dear Lecturer

I am conducting a study the aim of which is to help students improve their reading and writing. Please assist by filling in this questionnaire as honestly as possible. All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Please give detailed answers, elaborating (as much as possible) wherever necessary.

First Name : _____ Surname : _____
Age : _____
Gender : ☐ Male ☐ Female

Teaching Subjects : _____
Number of years of experience in teaching at tertiary level : _____

Part I : Reading

1a. Is reading important in your discipline? Yes No
☐ ☐

b. If no, please state the reason(s) : _____

c. If yes, describe the ways in which you emphasize the importance of reading in the classroom? _____

2a. Do you ask students to pre-read content material before you lecture it? Yes No
☐ ☐

b. Do you ask students to read content material after you lecture it? Yes No

☐ ☐

3. Apart from the recommended texts, are your students required to consult additional texts in completing their assignments / writing tasks?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How would you classify the level of difficulty of the text books that you use for your subjects?

Very Easy Quite Easy Quite Hard Very Hard

5. Should the teaching of reading skills be integrated into the curriculum? Yes No
☐ ☐

Please elaborate: _____

Part II : Writing

- 6a. How important is writing for your discipline(s)?

Very Important
☐

Important to some degree
☐

Not important
☐

- b. If not important, please state the reason(s) : _____

- 7a. How often do you give students tasks that require writing?

Weekly
☐

Every 2 weeks
☐

Once a month
☐

Once a term
☐

Never
☐

- b. In your opinion, with what aspects of writing do students experience difficulty? _____

- 8a. Do you provide students with guidelines on how to write assignments? Yes No
☐ ☐

- b. If no, please state why : _____

9. Should teaching of writing skills in an explicit and focused manner be integrated into the curriculum? Yes No
☐ ☐

Please elaborate : _____

Thank you for your assistance

Appendix 4

Interview Schedule 1 : Students' attitudes and practices towards reading and writing

Section A : Reading

1. Do you enjoy reading? If no, why not?
2. What type of materials do you read and how often?
3. Were you ever taught reading strategies at school?
- 4a. Do you experience difficulty when reading?
 - b. If yes, what kind of difficulties do you experience?
 - c. What do you do to overcome these difficulties?
- 5a. Apart from your prescribed textbook(s) and your lecture notes, do you consult additional reading material in your discipline?
 - b. If no, why not?
 - c. If yes, do you find these texts easy or difficult to read?
6. Do your lecturers encourage you to read?

Section B : Writing

7. Do you enjoy writing? If yes, what types of writing do you enjoy doing?
If no, why?
8. Are you required to do a lot of writing in your discipline?
9. Do you experience any difficulty when writing? If yes, explain.
10. When given writing tasks by your lecturers, are clear guidelines given on the requirements of the tasks, for example, length of task, how to write up the introduction, table of contents, etc.?
11. Are you informed by your lecturer as to how your writing will be assessed? In other words, the marking criteria perhaps using a rubric?
12. Do you think that the teaching of reading and writing should be integrated into the curriculum?

Interview Schedule 2 : Family history and background

1. Do you live with your family?
2. Where do you live? / family? Why?
3. Mum/ dad/ brothers/ sisters – ages/ occupation/ language/education level
4. Types of materials read at home by mum/ dad/ brothers/ sisters (religious texts)

[reading that typifies this particular family]

[Role of reading in their own personal lives, and how far this role has been shaped by early family and school experiences]

[writing]

Interview Schedule 3 : Childhood memories of reading/writing

1. First memories of reading (what, where, with whom?)
2. Favourite reading as a child?
3. Favourite reading as an adult?
4. Most important book/s or author/s in your life
5. Main roles and purposes of reading (e.g. for study, pleasure, religious purposes)
6. Reading in school/ university

Interview Schedule 4 : Action research project

1. Did you enjoy the lessons on reading strategies?
2. What specifically did you like/did not like?
3. Are you using any of the strategies taught?
4. Do you find them easy/difficult to use?

Appendix 5

Assignment Topic

Discuss: The importance of practising infection control in the dental laboratory

In this assignment one will need to discuss:

- a) in **detail** what diseases are we in danger of catching in the laboratory
- b) the **practical procedures** that a lab owner could use to avoid dangers to our health
- c) the findings of the research work undertaken by yourself, relative to this assignment, in two commercial dental laboratories.

References:

There are many books in the library that cover this topic.

This assignment may be done with a partner.

Appendix 6

Pre-test for reading the main idea, guessing the meaning of a word from the context, and summarization

Initials & Surname:

Student No:

Time: 1 hour

Total Marks: 25

Instructions:

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Though it may be situated in a different block, town or even country, the dental laboratory is an integral part of the dental practice it serves. Though often separated from each other by great distances the sterility and disinfection chain must not be broken at any point; otherwise, microorganisms will be transferred from one establishment to the other. We have already seen that the whole dental team is at risk from blood- and saliva-borne viruses. The dental technician is part of that team and is equally at risk. For mutual protection it is now mandatory that there is complete understanding between all parties concerned over the protocols for cross-infection control and its application to dental procedures that involve work being sent to a dental laboratory.

The dentist and the technician must discuss the problem and decide on a united approach. We would stress that we believe the dentist is responsible for seeing that any work leaving his surgery and destined for a laboratory has been decontaminated and disinfected first. All work should be treated as potentially infected and a routine established to decontaminate all impressions and items that have been placed in the patient's mouth. Unless technicians can be absolutely certain that these procedures have been carried out, they must protect themselves by instituting their own cross-infection controls.

Procedures in the surgery need to be examined together with those in the laboratory to eliminate duplication or oversight of cross-infection control applicable to work being passed between the two. (251 words)

(Croser and Chipping, 1989:101)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the main idea or topic sentence of paragraph one? (2)
2. What is the main idea or topic sentence of paragraph two? (2)
3. Provide a suitable title or heading of not more than 5 words for the above passage. (2)
4. Write a summary of the above passage. You must use full sentences and your sentences must make sense. Your summary should not exceed 114 words. Write down the number of words used. (14)
5. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

There are four stages during an infectious disease: incubation, prodromal, acute, and convalescent. **Pathogens** may be spread to others during each of these stages.

The incubation stage of an infectious disease is the period from the initial entrance of the **infectious agent** into the body to the time when the first symptoms of the disease appear. During this time the disease agent is simply surviving in the body or multiplying and producing

harmful products that ultimately damage the body. The incubation period may range from a few hours to years, depending on the disease producing potential of the microorganism, the number of microorganisms that enter the body, and the resistance of the body to the microorganism. All infectious diseases have an **incubation stage**, because we seldom, if ever, are exposed to a sufficient number of microorganisms to cause immediate symptoms. The entering microorganisms must multiply to sufficient numbers that **overwhelm** local or body-wide defense systems before enough damage occurs to result in a **recognizable symptom** (e.g., fever, swelling, skin discoloration, ulceration, pain, bleeding, watery eyes, “running nose”, etc.).

(Miller and Palenik, 1998:24-25)

5.1 Explain the meaning of the following words in the passage.

5.1.1 pathogens

5.1.2 infectious agent

5.1.3 incubation stage

5.1.4 overwhelm

5.1.5 recognizable symptoms

(5)

Appendix 7

Post-test for reading the main idea, guessing the meaning of a word from the context, and summarization.

Initials and Surname:
Time: 1 hour

Student No:
Total Marks: 25

Instructions:

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

The fact that a sterilisation process has taken place does not give any guarantee that the load has been properly sterilised. Undetected failures can have very serious, even **fatal**, consequences. All sterilisation procedures must be carefully and consistently monitored to detect failures and assure sterility.

Recording devices on sterilising equipment can be used to monitor operating conditions. The readings will indicate any **deviations** from standard conditions. However, it is important to realise that even standard readings do not guarantee that the entire load has been subject to identical sterilising conditions.

You cannot possibly monitor every item for its degree of contamination, so they must be **randomly** selected for evaluation. It is a matter of chance whether you will select those most heavily contaminated.

Chemical indicators can be placed throughout the load to check on local sterilising conditions within the load.

The most accurate test to determine whether the load is sterile uses biological indicators. The most commonly used are spore strips. These are pieces of filter paper **impregnated** with highly resistant bacterial spores. They are placed in areas where sterilising conditions are most difficult to achieve: the lower front of an autoclave where there may be air pockets; the coolest areas of a hot air oven; the interior of bulky loads. When the sterilisation cycle is complete, the strips are removed with sterile tweezers, placed in a **broth** and incubated.

The choice of spores depends upon the process being monitored. The most resistant organism is selected as its destruction would indicate that less resistant organisms have also been destroyed. The spore of *Bacillus subtilis* is chosen for dry heat and ethylene oxide processes, whilst that of *Bacillus stearothermophilus* is preferred for steam sterilisation. (283 words)

(Croser and Chipping, 1989:44)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the main idea or topic sentence of paragraph one? (2)
2. What is the main idea or topic sentence of paragraph five? (2)
3. Explain the meaning of the following words in the passage.
 - 3.1 fatal
 - 3.2 deviation
 - 3.3 randomly

3.4 impregnated

3.5 broth

(5)

4. Provide a suitable title or heading of not more than 5 words for the above passage.

(2)

5. Write a summary of the above passage bearing in mind that you must use full sentences and that the sentences must make sense.

Your summary should not exceed 124 words.

(14)

Appendix 8

Worksheet one: identifying the main idea in a paragraph

A paragraph can be defined as a group of related sentences about a single topic. The three essential elements of a good paragraph are

- i) the topic: the one thing the paragraph is about. Every sentence and idea in the paragraph relates to the topic.
- ii) the main idea: is the central or most important thought in the paragraph. The sentence that has the main idea is called the topic sentence.
- iii) details: or supporting ideas in the paragraph explain, support, prove or give reasons which explain the main idea in the paragraph (McWhorter 1995:113).

The main idea may appear in several places, such as

First sentence: This is the most common place to find the main idea. The author simply states the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph and then elaborates on it;

Last sentence: This is the second most common position of the topic sentence. In this type of paragraph, the author leads or builds up to the main idea and then states it in a sentence at the very end;

Middle of the paragraph: This is another common placement of the topic sentence. In this case, the author builds up to the main idea, states it in the middle of the paragraph, and then elaborates on it; and

First and last sentences: Sometimes the main idea is stated twice in one paragraph. In this kind of paragraph, the writer usually states the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph, then explains or supports the idea, and then restates the main idea at the end (McWhorter 1995: 121-122).

Modelling: using Paragraph 1 below I will model the process of identifying the main idea.

Paragraph 1:

Most dentists believe that there are a few potential HBV carriers in their practice and, hence, there is little chance of infection in their office or indeed in the profession as a whole. They are not alone because the majority of the medical profession, including staff members of the hospitals, believed the same myth until recently. The number of patient population groups that have a significantly increased prevalence of HBV infection, and hence an increased prevalence of the carrier state, is much larger than one would imagine. The dentist and the entire clinical dental staff are included in these high-risk populations (Cottone *et al.* 1996:25).

In order to identify the main idea in Paragraph 1, I ask the following questions:

- What do I have to do? I have to read the passage and find the main idea. (this question will help you focus on the task at hand).
- What is a main idea? The main idea is the central thought in a paragraph.
- What is the central thought in the above paragraph? The dentist and the entire dental staff are at risk of HBV infections.

- Which sentence states the central thought? The last sentence
- Reread the passage to confirm your answer (self-monitoring)

Practice: using the method modelled above, work in pairs and practise finding the main idea in paragraphs 2 to 4.

Paragraph 2:

Sterilization is the process by which all forms of microorganisms are destroyed, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and spores. Although methods of sterilization include the use of steam under pressure (autoclave), dry heat, chemical vapor, ethylene oxide gas, or immersion in chemical sterilant solutions, the use of the latter is discouraged. Immersion in a chemical sterilant solution instead of the use of physical means of sterilization is not recommended for several reasons (Cottone *et al* 1996:3).

Paragraph 3:

One of the most clearly documented cases of diseases spread in a dental office occurred as a result of not routinely gloving for patient care. An ungloved hygienist with dermatitis on her hands and fingers cared for a patient with active herpes labialis (herpes simplex infection on the lips). About a week later, vesicles of herpetic whitlow developed on the hygienist's hands. Before any sign of her infection appeared, however, she unknowingly spread the virus to at least 20 other patients, who developed intraoral herpes lesions. When the vesicles appeared on the hygienist's hands, she began to routinely wear gloves, which prevented further spread of the virus to any more patients (Miller and Palenik 1998:114).

Paragraph 4:

Infection with the varicella-zoster virus (VZV) is universal. VZV is transmitted from person to person by droplet or airborne spread of secretions from the respiratory tract of patients with chickenpox or contact with vesicular fluid, skin and mucous membranes, and freshly contaminated articles. In metropolitan communities, up to 90% of the population had chickenpox by age 15 and nearly 95% of young adults had already had the illness. In temperate climates, chickenpox occurs most frequently during the winter and early spring. Chickenpox is one of the most readily communicable diseases, especially in its early stages of pathogenesis. The incubation period is commonly 2 to 3 weeks. It may be longer after passive immunization against varicella and in people who are not immunodeficient. The period of communicability is usually 1 to 2 days before the onset of rash and as long as 5 days after the appearance of the first crop of vesicles. Contagiousness may be prolonged in patients with altered immunity, and susceptible people should be considered infectious 10 to 21 days after exposure. Infection is usually more severe in adults than children (Cottone *et al.* 1996:84-85).

Homework: working on your own, identify the main idea in each of the paragraphs below.

Paragraph 5:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard indicates that employers shall ensure that all employees with occupational exposure participate in a training program on the hazards associated with body fluids and the protective measures to be taken to minimize the risk of occupational exposure. The training is to be provided at no cost to the employee at the time of initial appointment and at least annually thereafter, as well as whenever job tasks change that may reflect the employees' potential for exposure. The training must be given to full-time, part-time, and temporary employees who have a potential for exposure (Miller and Palenik 1998:94).

Paragraph 6:

There are several causes of diseases in the body. Some are associated with microorganisms but others result from a malfunctioning of an organ (e.g. hyperthyroidism, diabetes), a nutritional deficiency (e.g. rickets, scurvy), an allergic reaction (e.g. hayfever, asthma, poison ivy), and abnormal growth of cells (e.g. cancer, tumors (Miller and Palenik 1998:23).

Paragraph 7:

During dental procedures, large particles of debris and saliva can be ejected toward the oral health care provider's face. These particles can contain large concentrations of bacteria and can physically damage the eyes. Protective eyewear is indicated, not only to prevent physical injury, but also to prevent infection. Of particular concern are the herpes simplex viruses and *Staphylococcus aureus*; however, most members of the normal oral flora must be considered opportunistic pathogens. Recent evidence has shown that hepatitis B can be transmitted to a chimpanzee by gentle placement of contaminated fluid under the eyelid (Cottone *et al.* 1996: 141).

Paragraph 8:

The relationship between aerosols and disease has not been completely defined. There have been a number of investigations concerning the effect of aerosols on dental personnel and laboratory technicians, but there is still some controversy on this subject. Studies in the late 1930s and early 1940s found that laboratory technicians who performed grinding and polishing procedures had a high percentage of silicosis. Some investigations found that the death rate from respiratory diseases among dentists doubled from 1960 to 1972, which some have attributed to the aerosols generated by airturbine handpieces. However, not all studies have demonstrated that dental aerosols pose a high risk to health (Goldman *et al.* 1984: 26).

Paragraph 9:

Patients with infectious diseases deserve the same high standards of dental care as any other patient. Infectious disease patients do present certain problems and require special management for the protection of other patients and health care providers. Dental care can be safely delivered to even the high-risk patients such as HBV or tuberculosis patients if certain precautions are taken to prevent cross-contamination and infection of other patients or the dental team (Goldman *et al.* 1984:67).

Paragraph 10:

Aerosol Hazards: Dental aerosols may be defined as suspensions of extremely fine air borne particles that are liquid, solid, or combinations of both. Aerosol particles are microscopic and are generally described as being less than 50 μ in diameter, which allows them to remain suspended in air for long periods of time. The definition of an aerosol implies that the suspension may persist for over 24 hours. The particles may settle out of suspension over a period of time, but also may be carried considerable distances from their origin before this "settling out" occurs. The major hazard arising from aerosols is associated with their small particle size, which allows them to enter the respiratory system (Goldman *et al.* 1984:21).

Appendix 9

Worksheet two: guessing the meaning of a word from the context

Often, among the unfamiliar words are various clues that allow the reader to reason out the meaning of the unknown word. The words around an unknown word that contain clues to its meaning are referred to as the context. The clues themselves are called context clues (McWhorter 1995:348). You should be able to recognize the different kinds of clues. Sometimes, however, there may not be enough hints in the text to work out the meaning. In this case, you can make use of a dictionary.

HOW TO USE SENTENCE HINTS FOR WORD MEANINGS

Hint	Example	Explanation
Some sentences set off the definition for a difficult word by means of punctuation.	<i>Origami</i> – Japanese paper folding – is family fun. <i>Fibrin</i> , elastic threads of protein, helps blood to clot.	Dashes parentneses (), brackets [] Commas
Sometimes <i>helping words</i> , along with punctuation, provide important clues.	Mary felt <i>perturbed</i> ; that is, she was greatly disturbed by her sister's actions.	Helping words: <i>that is, meaning, such as, or, is called.</i>
Some sentences tell the opposite of what a new word means. From its opposite, you can figure out the meaning of the word.	Parents who constantly spank their children can not be called <i>lenient</i> .	If you are <i>lenient</i> , you do not often punish your children. <i>Merciful</i> or <i>gentle</i> would be a good guess for the meaning of <i>lenient</i> . Helping words to show opposites: <i>not, but, although, however, on the other hand.</i>
Sometimes you can use your own experiences to figure out the definition of a word.	The <i>cacophonous</i> rattling made Maria cover her ears.	A noise that would make you cover your ears would be <i>unpleasant</i> or <i>jarring</i> .
Sentences before or after a sentence containing a difficult word sometimes explain the meaning of the word.	Mozart gave his first public recital at the age of six. By age thirteen he had written symphonies and an operetta. He is justly called a child <i>prodigy</i> .	It would certainly take a remarkably talented person to do these things. An extraordinary person, then, would be a <i>prodigy</i> .
Some sentences are written just to give the definitions of difficult words – words that readers will need to know in order to understand what they are reading.	One of the remarkable features of the Nile Valley is the <i>fertility</i> of its soil. This rich earth that supported plant growth made it possible for Egyptians to thrive in a dry region.	The second sentence, which tells you that the soil was rich and that it supported plant growth explains <i>fertility</i> .
Because some sentences give examples for a new word, you can build a definition.	Select a <i>periodical</i> from among the following: <i>Playboy, Time, Reader's Digest</i> or <i>Seventeen</i> .	The sentence does not say that a <i>periodical</i> is a magazine, but you can figure that out from the examples.

Some sentences use a word you do know to help explain a word you do not know.

A *formidable* enemy is one to be feared.

Formidable – through the clues in this sentence – means *fearful* or *dreadful*.

(Wiener and Bazerman 1988:11)

Modelling: using the example provided below I will model some of the above listed context clues. However, before commencing I should ask myself the following questions:

- What do I have to do? I have to use clues from the context to find the meaning of the unknown word.
- What are context clues? They are hints provided by the words and sentences surrounding the unfamiliar word.
- What are the context clues in the paragraphs below that gives you an indication of the meaning of the underlined word?

Paragraph 11:

Hepatitis B, an inflammation of the liver, is a major health problem in the United States and is endemic (occurs regularly) in other parts of the world. Between 2000,000 and 3000,000 people are infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) each year. Approximately 10,000 will require hospitalization, approximately 250 will die of fulminant hepatitis (an overwhelming and rapidly destructive form of the disease), and approximately 15,000 will become chronic carriers of the virus (Miller and Palenik 1998:54).

Practice: working in pairs practise using the clues from the context to get the meaning of the underlined words in paragraphs 12 and 13.

Paragraph 12:

Hepatitis B virus is spread percutaneously (through the skin) or permucosally (through mucous membranes) by contact with infected body fluids, for example, at birth, during sexual activities, or with contaminated needles or other sharp objects (Miller and Palenik 1998:58).

Paragraph 13:

If symptoms develop after infection, they begin to appear approximately 2.5 to 6 months after exposure. Roughly one third of those infected exhibit the more easily recognizable symptoms of yellowing of the skin (jaundice) and whites of the eyes, light-colored stools, dark urine, joint pain, fever, a rash, and itching. Approximately another one third develop less descript mild symptoms that may include malaise ("not feeling good"), loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain. The other one-third develop no symptoms at all. Thus two-thirds of all those infected develop no symptoms or have mild non-descript symptoms that are often unrecognized as being related to hepatitis. Yet symptomatic and asymptomatic cases can spread the virus to others. This unrecognizable infection with HBV and with other viruses (such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), serves as the basis for universal precautions – applying infection control procedures during care for all patients not just for those who are known to be infected (Miller and Palenik 1998: 59).

Homework: working on your own, identify and use the context clues in paragraphs 14 to 17 to help you understand the meaning of the underlined words.

Paragraph 14:

Human herpes virus (HHV) cause several diseases. Human herpes virus type 1 (herpes simplex virus [HSV-1] may cause infections of the mouth, skin, eyes, and genitals, and those who have depressed immune systems (immunocompromised) may have a widespread (systemic) infection.

About 90% of adults have been infected with HHV-1. Only 10% of infected persons (usually children) experience the typical symptoms of oral herpes (primary herpetic gingivostomatitis). In this disease, vesicle-type lesions occur in the mouth. Most (if not all) herpes viruses cause recurrent diseases (periodic re-occurrence of the disease). An example is labialis, sometimes called fever blisters, with lesions periodically appearing on the lips. Vesicles during active HHV-1 infections at any site of the body contain the virus that may be spread to others by direct contact with these lesions. Also, the HHV-1 may be present in saliva in those with oral or lip lesions and in a small percent of those who are infected but have no active lesions. In such instances, direct contact with lesions may cause infection of the skin or sprays or aerosols of the saliva may result in spread of the virus to unprotected eyes of the dental team. Entrance of the virus through breaks in the skin on unprotected hands and fingers may lead to vesicle development at these sites called herpetic whitlow ((Miller and Palenik 1998:70).

Paragraph 15:

It is important to distinguish cross infection from contamination. Contamination is the transfer of exogenous micro-organisms to a patient. Exogenous (as opposed to endogenous) micro-organisms are those not normally found in a particular patient. Cross infection control is the sum total of all the measures taken to prevent subsequent infection. In dentistry, the techniques used have to be specially adapted so they can be easily applied to the wide range of different procedures undertaken (Martin 1991:1).

Paragraph 16:

The routine use of the medical history has been advocated as the method of identification of patients capable of transmitting infectious disease. Such advocates are operating on fallacious grounds as often it is impossible to distinguish infectious patients from their medical history. This is due in part to the fact that many patients are unaware of their medical status and also that some conceal or are at best economical with the truth (Martin 1991:5).

Paragraph 17:

There are several causes of diseases in the body. Some are associated with microorganisms but others result from a malfunctioning of an organ (e.g., hyperthyroidism, diabetes), a nutritional deficiency (e.g., rickets, scurvy), an allergic reaction (e.g., hayfever, asthma, poison ivy), and abnormal growth of cells (e.g., cancer, tumours).

An infectious disease occurs when a microorganism in the body multiplies and causes damage to the tissues. The microorganisms that cause infectious diseases are called pathogens.

There are two types of infectious diseases: endogenous and exogenous. These terms refer to the source of the microorganism. Endogenous diseases are caused by microorganisms that are normally present on or in the body without causing harm but something happens that allows them to express their disease-producing potential. Examples of oral endogenous infectious diseases caused by members of the normal oral flora are *dental caries*, *pulpitis*, *periodontal diseases*, and *cervicofacial actinomycosis*. The causative agents of these diseases are called opportunistic pathogens. They cause diseases only when given a special opportunity to enter deeper tissues of the body or to accumulate to levels that can harm the body.

An exogenous disease is caused by microorganisms that are not normally present on or in the body but contaminate the body from the outside. Most infectious diseases are exogenous diseases (e.g., hepatitis B, "strep throat", acquired immunodeficiency syndrome [AIDS], measles, chickenpox, the common cold, influenza).

Some exogenous microorganisms can also cause disease without entering and multiplying in the body. These are called toxigenic diseases and occur after eating food in which microorganisms have multiplied and produced toxins, or poisons (e.g., *Staphylococcus* food poisoning, botulism) (Miller and Palenik 1998:23).

Appendix 10

Worksheet three: summarizing

A summary is a brief statement or list of ideas that identifies the major concepts in a passage or textbook section. Its main purpose is to record the most important ideas in a condensed form (McWhorter 1995:237).

The following summarizing rules as proposed by Brown and Day (1983:2) can be used as a guideline:

- Select a topic sentence. If there is no topic sentence, invent your own.
- Delete unnecessary material, that is, material that is trivial and redundant.
- Substitute a superordinate term or event for a list of items or actions. For example, the term *pets* can be substituted for *cats, dogs, rabbits, and parrots*. Alternately, a superordinate action (*John went to London*) can be substituted for a list of subcomponents of an action such as *John left the house, John went to the train station and John bought a ticket*.

Modelling: using the rules listed above I will model the process of summarization. The following questions need to be asked while trying to write up the summary for the passage below:

- What am I required to do? I have to read the passage and summarize it.
- What do I do first? I must underline the main idea or topic sentence.
- What is the main idea? It is the central thought in the paragraph, that is, "Vaccination against Hepatitis B".
- What do I do next? I must leave out unnecessary words, for example, repetitions, examples, or descriptions and use one instead of many.
- Once completed I must read my summary. Does it make sense? Have I captured the essence of the paragraph?

Paragraph 18:

Vaccination against Hepatitis B: Dental health care workers are at a greater risk than the general population for acquiring hepatitis B through contact with patients. It is the policy of the American Dental Association (ADA) that all dentists and their staff having patient contact should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. The Occupational Safety Health Association (OSHA) Standard now requires that employers make the hepatitis B vaccine available to occupationally exposed employees, at the employer's expense, within 10 working days of assignment of tasks that may result in exposure (Cottone *et al.* 1996:2).

Practice: working in pairs, summarize the exercise given below.

Paragraph 19:

Barrier techniques: gloves must be worn when skin contact with body fluids or mucous membranes is anticipated, or when touching items or surfaces that may be contaminated with these fluids. After contact with each patient, gloves must be removed, hands must be washed, and then regloved before treating another patient. Repeated use of a single pair of gloves by disinfecting them between patients is not acceptable. Exposure to disinfectants or other chemicals often causes defects in gloves, thereby diminishing their value as effective barriers. Latex or vinyl gloves should be used for patient examinations and procedures. Heavy rubber

gloves, should preferably be used for cleaning instruments and environmental surfaces. Dentists should be aware that allergic reactions to latex gloves or the cornstarch powder in gloves have been reported in health care workers and patients. To reduce the possibility of such reactions, nylon glove liners for use under latex, rubber or plastic gloves are available. Polyethylene gloves, also known as food-handlers' gloves, may be worn over treatment gloves to prevent contamination of objects such as drawer or light handles or charts (Cottone *et al.* 1996:2)

Homework: summarize the following exercises on your own.

Paragraph 20:

Handling of sharp instruments and needles: needles, scalpel blades, and other sharp instruments should be handled carefully to prevent injuries. Syringe needles may be recapped after they are used. If a patient requires multiple injections over time from a single syringe, then the needle should be recapped between each use to avoid the possibility of needle stick injury. Needles can be safely recapped by placing the cap in a special holder, by using a forceps or other appropriate instrument to grasp the cap, or by simply laying the cap on the instrument tray and then guiding the needle into the cap until the cap can be completely seated. Therefore, when recapping, the cap must not be held in the operator's hand as this poses a great risk of needle stick injury.

Disposal needles should not be bent or broken after use. Needles should not be removed manually from disposable syringes or otherwise handled manually. Forceps or other appropriate instruments may be used to handle sharp items. Disposal syringes, needles, scalpel blades, and other sharp items should be discarded into puncture-resistant biohazard (sharps) containers that are easily accessible (Cottone *et al.* 1996:3).

Paragraph 21:

Sterilization and disinfection: sterilization is the process by which all forms of microorganisms are destroyed, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and spores. Although methods of sterilization include the use of steam under pressure (autoclave), dry heat, chemical vapor, ethylene oxide gas, or immersion in chemical sterilant solutions, the use of the latter is discouraged. Immersion in a chemical sterilant solution instead of the use of physical means of sterilization is not recommended for several reasons: sterilization by chemical solutions cannot be monitored biologically; instruments sterilized by chemical solutions must be handled aseptically, rinsed in sterile water, and dried with sterile towels; and instruments sterilized by chemical solutions are not wrapped and, therefore, must be used immediately or stored in a sterile container.

Disinfection is generally less lethal to pathogenic organisms than sterilization. The disinfection process leads to a reduction in the level of microbial contamination and covers, depending on the disinfectant used and treatment time, a broad range of activity that may extend from sterility at one extreme to a minimal reduction in microbial contamination at the other. Disinfection may be accomplished by using a chemical disinfectant according to the directions on the product label. When chemical solutions are used for disinfection, manufacturers' instructions must be followed carefully. Particular attention should be given to dilution requirements (if any), contact time, temperature requirements, antimicrobial activity spectrum and reuse life. A chemical agent for disinfection (other than sodium hypochlorite) in the dental setting must be registered by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) as a hospital disinfectant, and must be tuberculocidal (Cottone *et al.* 1996:3).

Appendix 11

Scoring guidelines for the Survey of Reading Strategies

Student Name _____ Date _____

1. Write the number you circled for each statement (i.e. 1,2,3,4 or 5) in the appropriate blanks below.
2. Add up the scores under each column and place the result on the line under each column.
3. Divide the subscale score by the number of statements in each column to get the average for each subscale.
4. Calculate the average for the whole inventory by adding up the subscale scores and dividing by 30.
5. Use the interpretation guidelines below to understand your averages.

Global Reading Strategies (GLOB Subscale)	Support Reading Strategies (SUP Subscale)	Problem Solving Strategies (PROB Subscale)	Overall Reading Strategies (ORS)
1 _____	2 _____	7 _____	GLOB _____
3 _____	5 _____	9 _____	PROB _____
4 _____	10 _____	11 _____	SUP _____
6 _____	13 _____	14 _____	
8 _____	18 _____	16 _____	
12 _____	22 _____	19 _____	
15 _____	26 _____	25 _____	
17 _____	29 _____	28 _____	
20 _____	30 _____		
21 _____			
23 _____			
24 _____			
27 _____			

_____ GLOB Score	_____ SUP Score	_____ PROB Score	_____ Overall Score
_____ GLOB Average	_____ SUP Average	_____ PROB Average	_____ Overall Average

KEY TO AVERAGES: 3.5 or higher = High	2.5 – 3.4 = Medium	2.4 or lower = Low
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INTERPRETING YOUR SCORES: The overall average indicates how often you use reading strategies when reading academic materials. The average for each subscale shows which group of strategies (i.e. Global, Problem Solving, or Support strategies) you use most often when reading. It is important to note, however, that the best possible use of the strategies depends on your reading ability in English, the type of material read, and your reading purpose. A low score on any of the subscale or parts of the inventory indicates that there may be some strategies in there parts that you might want to learn about and consider using when reading (adapted from Oxford 1990: 297-300).

Appendix 12

Table 7.2: Distribution of responses to aspects of writing tasks received from EAL students

	Lots of difficulty	Some difficulty	Very little difficulty	No Difficulty
a. Using appropriate vocabulary	16.66%	52.77%	22.22%	8.33%
b. Expressing what you want to say clearly	11.11%	38.88%	33.33%	16.66%
c. Arranging and developing your written work	16.66%	30.55%	36.11%	19.44%
d. Writing an introduction to your assignment	11.11%	25%	41.66%	22.22%
e. Understanding the assignment/task question	2.77%	41.6%	30.55%	25%
f. Writing a conclusion to your assignment	25%	27.77%	27.77%	19.44%
g. Referencing your sources	44.44%	19.44%	25%	11.11%
h. Understanding the subject matter	5.55%	22.22%	47.22%	25%

Table 7.3: Distribution of responses to aspects of writing tasks received from EFL students

	Lots of difficulty	Some difficulty	Very little difficulty	No Difficulty
a. Using appropriate vocabulary	0%	19.23%	50%	30.76%
b. Expressing what you want to say clearly	11.53%	23.07%	46.15%	19.23%
c. Arranging and developing your written work	3.34%	11.53%	30.76%	53.84%
d. Writing an introduction to your assignment	0%	19.23%	57.69%	23.07%
e. Understanding the assignment/task question	0%	19.23%	38.46%	42.30%
f. Writing a conclusion to your assignment	7.69%	26.92%	46.15%	19.23%
g. Referencing your sources	7.69%	30.76%	34.6%	26.92%
h. Understanding the subject matter	0%	15.38%	38.46%	46.15%

Appendix 13: Table A : Interview responses

Name	FAMILY BACKGROUND								
	Residence	Siblings	Occupation of parents		Schooling of parents		Home Language	Language studied at school and symbols	Type of school
			Mum	Dad	Mum	Dad			
Edna	Home :Pretoria DUT residence	1 sister: completed Grade 12. Shop assistant 1 brother : schooling, Grade 8	Pensioner 59 years	Pensioner 61 years	Grade 5	Grade 5	Sotho Understands a little English	Tswana 1 st : D English 2 nd : D Afrikaans 3 rd : E	Poorly resourced
Andiswa	Chesterville	7 sisters : youngest in Grade 9, rest did not complete Grade 12 2 brothers : eldest did not complete Grade 12	Pensioner 60 years	Pensioner 70 years	Nil	Nil	Zulu Parents cannot speak English	Zulu : B English : F	Poorly resourced
Pumlani	Home: Limpopo DUT residence	2 step-sisters 2 step-brothers	Oral Hygienist 38 years	Stepfather, Traffic & Peace Officer 41 years	Grade 12 BTech degree in Oral Hygiene	Grade 12 Has a few certificates	Sepedi Can speak English	Sepedi : C English : C Afrikaans : D	Poorly resourced
Thembe	Home: Pietermaritzburg DUT residence	6 brothers : 1 st completed Grade 12, obtained a B Com diploma, Bank Teller 2 nd & 3 rd completed Grade 12, studying at DUT 2 sisters	Nurse at Edendale Hospital 47 years	Financial & Cultural Councillor 48 years	Grade 12 Nursing degree	Grade 12	Zulu	Zulu : C English: C	Semi resourced
Sibongile	Inanda	2 sisters: schooling 2 brothers : schooling	Domestic worker 40 years	Deceased at age 43 Was unemployed	Grade 3	Grade 3	Zulu Can speak English but rarely do	Zulu : B English : C	Poorly resourced
Patrick	Home: Limpopo DUT residence	2 sisters : completed Grade 12, unemployed 1 brother : completed Grade 3	Clerk 59 years	Clerk	Grade 10	Grade 9	Sepedi Parents can speak a little English	Sepedi : E English : E Afrikaans : F	Poorly resourced
Lunga	Kwa Mashu	2 sisters : schooling 1 brother : schooling	Housewife 40 years	Deceased at age 40 Shop Assistant	Grade 3	Grade 4	Zulu Parents cannot speak English	Zulu : C English : C	Poorly resourced
Vilakazi	Home: Harding/Folweni DUT residence	5 sisters : in boarding school 1 brother : completed Grade 12, studying BSc, Biological Science	Teacher 45 years	Teacher 49 years	Grade 12 HDE	Grade 12 HDE	Zulu	Zulu : C English : D	Well resourced
Melani	Durban North	1 brother : 31 years old, completed Grade 12, Consultant	Retired Businesswomen 57 years	Retired Businessman 77 years	Grade 5	Grade 8	Greek	English : D Afrikaans : E	Well resourced
Yasteel	Avoca Hills	3 sisters : 1 st completed Grade 12, 2 nd & 3 rd schooling	Hairdresser 44 years	Personal Driver 45 years	Grade 10 Hairdressing qualifications	Grade 12 Qualified Computer Analyst	English	English : E Afrikaans : D	Well resourced
Shikaar	Newlands West						English	English : C Afrikaans : D	Well resourced
Dhiren	Tongaat	1 sister : schooling, Grade 8 1 brother : studying at DUT	Buying clerk 47 years	Unemployed 51 years	Unsure (Grade 10)	Unsure	English	English : C Afrikaans : C	Well resourced

Appendix 13: Table B: Interview responses

	FAMILY ATTITUDES/PRACTICES OF READING			FAMILY ATTITUDES/PRACTICES OF WRITING			CHILDHOOD MEMORIES		SCHOOL EXPERIENCES	
	Mum	Dad	Siblings	Mum	Dad	Siblings	Reading	Writing	Reading	Writing
Name										
Edna	May occasionally buy Sunday Times. Finds it difficult to understand. Reads Bible.	None.	Only for school purposes.	None, (no need to read and write).		Only for school purposes.	No teaching by parents. Vaguely remembers flipping through pages of magazines and 'being more interested in the pictures than the words'.	Mum wrote letters on chalkboard which she copied until tired, did not happen too often.	Primary school: taught to read words. Secondary school: expected to know how to read/tested.	Learnt to write in Sotho first. Learnt English in Grade 3.
Andiswa	Cannot read.		Elder brother sometimes buys Ilanga or Drum, randomly. Sisters sometimes page through magazines.	Cannot write.		Only school related material.	No teaching by parents/siblings. Does remember mum telling Zulu poems and stories.	No teaching by parents/siblings.	Began reading English in Grade 1 - alphabet then words. Secondary school tested for marks.	
Pumlani	Lives with his granny. Not sure of reading writing practices of his parents and siblings.						Cousins would show him pictures in books.	Older cousin taught him to write his name.	Learnt to read English in Grade 1.	Learnt to write English in Grade 1.
Thembe	Zulu magazine: Drum, True Love, Bona on monthly basis.	Isolezwe (Zulu newspaper). Used to buy Natal Witness.	Brother buys Isolezwe or Natal Witness ± 3 times a week.	Sometimes writes notes in Church.	Keeps diary for appointments.	Write only for academic reasons.	Parents did not read to her much, mum did tell Zulu stories. Remembers looking at pictures in brother's school books.	No teaching by siblings/parents.	In primary school: taught letters/words. Secondary school expected to know how to read - tested and given marks	Primary school: taught letters of alphabet and how to write clearly
Sibongile	Ilanga & Isolezwe, bought on Mondays. Reads Bible at church.	Used to read sports magazines.	Only school related material.	No need to write.		School related.	Parents did not read to her. Does not recall them telling her stories.	No teaching of writing.	Began to read English in Grade 3. Teacher would read and then they would read after her.	Primary school-teacher write words on board; they would copy it down.
Patrick	Occasionally buys True Love Magazine.	Buys Sowetan newspaper on almost daily basis.	School books.	Only at work.		School related but youngest sister is always writing.	Parents did not read or tell him stories.	Parents did not teach him to write.	Learnt English in Grade 1. Teacher often switched from Sepedi to English - tested for marks	Grade 1 (English for the first time).
Lunga	Bible, occasionally.	On some occasions have seen dad paging through Ilanga and Isolezwe	School material.	No writing done.		School related writing.	Parents did not read to him. May have told him stories, cannot remember.	No writing taught by parents.	Learnt English in Grade 1. Teacher read, then pupils read. Started with alphabet.	Grade 1 (English for the first time) - learnt alphabet/words.
Vilakazi	City Press/Sunday Times/Ilanga; not sure how often these are bought, but does see them when he goes home.		School related material.	Work related.		School related.	Lived with granny. Parents did not read to him. Granny told Zulu fairy tales.	Did not learn to write prior to school.	Learnt English in Grade 3. Grade 1 and 2 taught to read in Zulu. Tested for marks.	Zulu Grade 1 and 2. English Grade 3.
Melani	No Greek materials available. Speak very little English. Sometimes buy joke books from Greece.		Brother tends to read computer related books.			Unsure.	Parents read to her in Greek, but not often.	Mum taught her to write in Greek.	Learnt English in Grade 1.	Grade 1 (English).
Yasteel	Receives complimentary hairdressing magazines.	Mercury/Daily News almost daily.	Mostly magazines that mum gets and school material.	Keeping of account/queries, but not much.	Not often.	School related.	Mum used to read to her and encourage her to read - first words then sentences. Remembers reading story books over and over.	Mum taught her to write letters of alphabet, then words.	Knew how to read alphabet/some words before going to school. Reinforced in primary school. In secondary school tested for marks.	Knew how to write before going to school.
Shikaar								Parents taught him to write letters/words.	Knew how to read some words. Teacher read and they followed in books.	Knew how to write before going to school.
Dhiren	Used to get Daily News and weekend paper, not any more. Subscription to Readers Digest, monthly basis. Dad enjoys reading western novels.		School related.	Only when necessary, e.g. when mum writes work related memo or father writes (letter to client).		School.	Parents would flip through pages of books and tell him stories.	Parents taught him to write.	Knew how to read some words. Teacher read and they followed.	Knew how to write before going to school.

Appendix 13: Table C: Interview responses

	KNOWLEDGE OF READING STRATEGIES	DEFINITION OF READING	WHAT IS READING ABOUT?
Name			
Edna	Not taught. Used dictionary for different words. For content, 'I will repeat it again for second time and if its really hard to understand I just ask somebody...if its not important I just leave it.'	A way...its all about.how you go through the actuality of reading and how you understand it.	Reading is about reading anything, reading a magazine, anything and we read to get knowledge of.... for instance if you are doing a subject you get knowledge about that subject if you are reading a magazine you get knowledge about certain things.
Andiswa	'No I never came across one.' When experiencing difficulty, 'usually write down the word on a paper.' Use dictionary or ask sister.	Reading is like those people reading for news, they just talk and if you are just reading you have confidence, so I don't think you can be shy because you just read.	Reading is about information, new thinks, solving problems, lots of things and knowledge in books.
Pumlani	Taught in school. '...when reading a book try not to loose the intention...try to get some points...,try to concentrate...try to picture the event for a better understanding.	Getting information & ...understanding of what you are reading, getting the main idea, ...the content & picture..& ...take the information ...& put in your own words.	Getting information, try getting the picture, the main idea & putting all these things together.
Thembie	'I'm thinking how you do your study, taking up all your work and dividing it in times and how long it takes to read that.' Strategies taught in school. Remembers mind maps. 'The rest I discovered myself'.	Feeding your brain cells. If you read everyday it makes you stronger, you know what you are talking about & you can be confident about it – it gives you power.	Growing psychologically and physically. The more you grow, it is normal the more you grow the more you feed your brain and if you don't feed your brain you stay dumb as you are.
Sibongile	Not taught in school. When experiencing difficulties read aloud, 'like I talk'.	Reading is just for getting knowledge.	Reading is about getting information.
Patrick	Not taught. Uses dictionary often.	..is all about when a person really wants to know something because you can't really read something that don't have interest in you.	Reading is all about improving your knowledge, of knowing life and knowing what to expect in the future.
Lunga	Not taught in school. For difficult words uses dictionary. Generally does not experience much difficulty.	..getting information from the book which might help you. I don't think its reading just for fun – if you're not going to get anything. Reading something useful which has useful information especially to you.	Reading is all about getting information.
Vilakazi	'I would not say I use techniques, because I just read through but when I get to a word I do not understand I try to use the dictionary'.	Changing words & giving words meaning & trying to understand what someone is saying.	About understanding how things are happening in the novel you are reading.
Melani	Taught in Grade 3 after she failed. Has difficulty reading letters that are thin and longish and that are close together.	Knowledge written down on a piece of paper. Its words that you have learnt from very young so its more like symbols going into your brain which it recognizes & it makes you understand the words & meanings ...it projects knowledge to your brain or improves your brain cells so its just written material that you see with your eyes & it goes into your mind.	About looking in books. Reading is anything that you can find in front of your eyes written in letters that you can understand especially in your language especially that provides knowledge and can improve vocabulary.
Yasteel	Not taught. Does not experience much difficulty with reading.	Informative, its relaxing, its protective in a way in that you read somebody else's lifestyle & how they went through stuff that you are going through now – it helps prevent yourself going through the whole thing they went through.	To inform themselves of everything going on around them, to alert themselves as well, make them aware of things happening.
Shikaar	Not taught. Does not experience much difficulty. When he does, then 'I re-read it first; If I still have a problem I go to my teacher for help'.	Going through an article & trying to pick up the main idea or the gist. You do a lot of reading for a lot of different purposes – you sometimes read for the fun of it. Sometimes you read because you have a purpose, you know like a subject.	Reading is about many different things. It about fun, picking up information that is important to daily life.
Dhiren	Taught skimming in Grade 8. Does not experience much difficulty. If he does, then 'If there's a word I don't know then I read the line again'.	...taking up a passage like looking at it & analysing it, like coming to know what the passage is about.	It's like analysing what you are looking at.

Appendix 13: Table D: Written responses during reading strategy interventions

	DEFINITION OF READING	UNDERSTANDING OF READING STRATEGIES	IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEA	
			What is the 'main idea'?	Reflective piece on lessons on 'main idea'
Name				
Edna	Actually I define reading as a process or an event were a person sucks on information or knowledge from the particular articles.	Not understanding some of the difficult words on what you are reading.	To get healighted of what is going on around you in the media.I found that they are very helpful, cause I now know that main idea usually it is the first sentence or the last sentence and the idea it is usually on the centre of the paragraph.
Andiswa	It is helping to pronance words, speaking and to be good on Reading. It all so help on knowdegdy of what you are reading.	To writt English, Zulu, etc. To be able to tell other about what you was reading. To know thing for a help of reading.	To know or get what is the paragraph about. To get an idea of story in the paragraph. To samaris the paragraph. To be able to writt an essay of what you was reading.	
Pumlani				
Thembie	Reading to me is knowledge because you are feeding your brain and knowing knew things that you didn't know as a result you grow sychologically....	I think it is to read anything that is optimistic that will help you to succed in life. Reading a mag or news paper when ever you can is a good thing but it all depends on time...	The main idea is to know more about the outside world how to improve your life and the way you think. In my case the idea is to learn new things, words and the way other people think and how I can avoid thinking that way...	I found it very useful because now I know where to find the main idea and how to find it and what is the main idea. That helps to understand the meaning of paragraph better and make it easy to summarize the paragraph.
Sibongile	... reading is all about gathering information, whether the information about whats going on in world or the information about my course subject. All in all I think reading is about gaining knowledge.	Reading strategies I think are the ways of reading like how to read for a test and these are: read the notes well; try to ask yourself questions; find question past papers and answer them; write down what you don't understand and ask for help or go to library. Also even if one is not reading for a test I think there are some ways (strategies) like reading slowly by understanding.	I think it the theme what the paragraph is about. I think it on the introduction.	I benefited a lot because I was thinking that the main idea is on the introduction only, so I thought that if a paragraph or a passage has no introduction that means the idea is hidden. And now I know that you can find the main idea even in the last sentence of the paragraph.
Patrick	Defination of reading is when reading something interesting to improve our knowledge and vocabulary also to achieve a certain goal in the future.	i)have some question why, this will make easy for understanding. ii) Read with a purpose of knowing things... iii) ...desire of the topic will put lot of concentration and alter analysis what you have read. iv) To re-read so that you can be able to summarized.	i) The main idea in the paragraph is to get the specific comprehension of the topic or title. ii) The other main idea to find if suggestion can be introduce from what you have read. iii) To be able to summarizing the paragraph of a certain topic.	...I really liked the way questions were asked by the lecture but I was losed from the beginning and at last I understand what was really needed or asked....
Lunga	Reading is the gaining of information which might help you, so the useful information from the book or any other source that is word written.	I think, is first concentrate on what you are reading and stay in a quite place and be relaxed as much as you can so that the information you find in that source gets into your head.	Is the exact point the paragraph is all about. One will find this in the body and sometimes in the introduction.	...beneficial...to everybody because one cannot be able to understand what one is reading without understanding and finding the main idea... will also help us to be able to concentrate in what you are reading because you have found the main idea what the passage is all about.
Vilakazi	I think reading is when one is actually looking and understanding word in such a manner that they will make sense or pass information from one person to another person who is reading.	It is the strategy that is adopted by an individual to interpret words in an easy and more understandable way so that the individual can actual know what the writer has written about.	The main idea is the actual reason for reading. The main idea is found at the beginning of the paragraph.	I think this is useful and really helpful because this help a reader to know what the extract is all about as soon as she/he reads what he/she is reading.
Melani	...when one translates words into the mind which will recognize it and understand. A way of communication. When looking at words your brain recognizes it and not only words but for the blind they have learnt to read with their hands....	The ways I believe to improve reading and understanding. It starts from the essay books working your way up to the difficult ones, with a dictionary next to you to understand new words that one comes across.	A main idea is an important thought or information in a paragraph which shows the main parts or what the purpose is in a paragraph.	We were shown a clear view on how to identify the main idea and we practiced how to identify it. It really helped me, and I now know clearly moreless of what to look for and understanding the questions. I thought this was benefitting.
Yasteel	Reading is meant to be knowlegdeable and also is a practice for maybe someone learning a specified language. It increases your knowledge in turn you become more educated, you learnt maybe about anothers culture or religion	This also increase knowledge and also a person vocabulary. Hence this person will tend to remember things easier and taken seriously. People are threatened by educated people.	The main idea is a message; a paragraph, a speech, a debate is sending out. Usually found in the first line.	The main idea is called the topic... In one sentence (topic) you could find out what the entire paragraph talks about. ...A topic sentence is usually used at the beginning of a paragraph but can also be used at the end, in the middle or even at the beginning and stated at the end again.
Shikaar	I feel that reading is when a person skims through or goes through a paragraph or book either to get some information from the text or just for fun or leisure.	When I am reading and I don't understand something in the text, then I go through the text again slowly and I break up the ideas to make the paragraph easier to understand.	The main idea is the main point that the writer wants to bring across to us and it is usually found in the beginning of a passage.	
Dhiren	Reading is the analysis or analysing the piece of writing infront of you. It could be analysing an article, newspaper or a paragraph.	...This is "skimming" and "scanning". Skimming is when you phase through a piece of writing very fast and try to see what you understand. Scanning is when you read through a paragraph, trying to analyse and make sense of it.	A main idea is the topic or agenda that the whole paragraph is about. A main idea would be towards the beginning of the paragraph.	The main idea is the most valuable information of the paragraph. The main idea can be found at the beginning of the paragraph, ... last sentence of the paragraph. By reading the main idea you could save time because you wont have to read the rest of the paragraph which is only elaborating on the main idea.

Appendix 13: Table E: Written responses during reading strategy interventions

	GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS FROM THE CONTEXT	
	What are context clues and what are some of the things you do when you have difficulty in reading?	Reflective piece on lesson guessing the meaning of words from the context
Name		
Edna	I use the dictionary, the library facilities (internate and books) or I ask my friend or somebody who I know she/he knows better than I.	Searching for the meaning of unfamiliar words in the dictionary or in the internate is not an easyest way to do...I found that this kind of clues are simple and comprehensible...
Andiswa	Sometimes I look a meaning of that word in a dictionary. I ask someone.	
Pumlani		
Thembie	If there is a word that I do not understand when I'm reading something, I ask around (people around me that know). If I still do not understand I use the dictionary.	One thing I learned or that I know, it is hard to understand something if you do not know the meaning of the word in a paragraph.
Sibongile	If there is something I don't understand in the paragraph like a word I look for the meaning in the dictionary.	I benefited a lot from this lesson. Because at first I didn't noticed these tricks of finding the meaning of the word from the context. I used to look for the meaning of word in the dictionary. Now I know that I read the whole sentence or sentences in the paragraph and find the meaning of the word. I also learns about the clues that can help me find the meaning of the word.
Patrick	... I read the context very carefully two or three time and if I come to conduct with the word which gives me problem of understanding I prefer to write it down ...and when I read for the second time will be already the meaning of the words from the dictionaryI founded that not having an idea or meet a new word for the first time will sometime mislead the understanding of the whole sentence. In the class I couldn't have an idea regarding some of the context and I suggested that writing all difficult words down will help me so that I can find out the words in the dictionary later on.
Lunga	I go and find it from the dictionary or I try and find somebody who might have a better understanding of it and if its above that, I just leave it.	It was beneficial because this system save the time to go and look for the meaning of the in the dictionary.
Vilakazi	When I don't understand a word in what I'm reading I just look for it in a dictionary or ask someone who I think knows it or either I just assume the meaning using the sentence in which the word is used. Anything beyond that I just live it like that.	I think using clues in the paragraph to find the meaning of the word is useful and really saves time rather than going back to your dictionary or start looking for a person who knows the word to tell you the meaning.
Melani		
Yasteel	I would continue to read the sentence to try and fit the word into context. Look for the word in the dictionary or ask someone.	Realised that clues to the meaning of a wordcan be anywhere in the sentence. Also.....can also occur in the paragraph: within brackets, commas or even dashes. Guessing the meaning of the word not only saves time but also helps you understand the real meaning of the word better.
Shikaar		
Dhiren		

Appendix 13: Table F (i): Written responses during reading strategy interventions

	SUMMARISING	
	What is a summary?	When do we make summaries?
Name		
Edna	Summary is nothing but to shorten a sentence or to make simple to understand e.g. A passage or story is long to read and is tough to be understood. Someone can summarize it to be easy by summarizing it.	On the long story or passages that has tough storys.
Andiswa	A summary is a short of information that you made for yourself. It help you to know your work very well if you summar's that you read.	I made summary if I am reading or studying for test or exam in my note so it could be easy for me to study and not to forget my work.
Pumlani	A summary can be referred to a list of important points extracted from a paragraph or information. The purpose of a summary is to gather only what is more important for that moment in time.	Summaries are made during times of studying for tests and exams, when reading an article in a magazine or newspaper and during the times where we want to have the main idea or the point being denoted in a paragraph or information.
Thembie	A summary is taking something and putting it in your own words but only making it shorter, saying the main points of that paragraph.	We summarize when we are doing assignment and you want to collect important information. When you are talking to someone about something/newspaper article, TV show etc, or when you transfer information, you only say the important things.
Sibongile	A summary is a collection of words or information from the paragraph or a certain book. It says the samething as what the book or paragraph it just that it is short. If maybe there is a story and it too a page than the summary will be a quarter of the page	When we want to understand something better. It better to summarize in your own words so that you don't forget. And we sometime make summary when talking and you that person that you are talking to understand easily what you are saying. Also when we don't want to be confused.
Patrick	Summary is when concising or brief a paragraph or story based on a particular object or subject.	Summary is made after reading and understanding by the reader from a certain concerpt or paragraph or story and perhaps give some suggestion from point of view.
Lunga	Is a brief information taken from a long passage and is only the important information about what was discussed in the passage.	when we only want the main points of the passage and so that it will be easy to understand.... We also summarise if there is too little time for long passage then we tend to be interested in the main point which are the important ones.
Vilakazi	A summary is when a person uses few words to say or write something which is actually longer, stressing only the important points.	We make summaries whenever we have to say or write something quickly and straight to the point. We sometimes make summaries to save time or maybe we are running out of time.
Melani	It is when you summarize a paragraph or reading passage that you rewrite mentioning the most important parts in the passage.	: In tests when they ask you to. When writing a report.
Yasteel		
Shikaar	It is a brief conclusion which highlights the main points about a passage or story etc.	We make summaries all the time, but we should use summaries most when we are close to the examinations and when we are learning and when we are getting important lectures which in some cases could be long.
Dhiren	A summary is a shortened piece of information that contains the main ideas or points within a coherent paragraph.	When we only need the main idea of a certain long piece of information, which contains a lot of examples which is not needed.

Appendix 13: Table F (ii): Written responses during reading strategy interventions

	SUMMARISING	
	Why do we summarise?	Reflection on lesson on making summaries
Name		
Edna	Purposely to make the story to be easily understood, or simple to shorten it.	In this lesson, we learnt how to summarize. I found that they are very helpful because I now know how to summarize.
Andiswa	Because on the book I don't think you need the holl information, you just take those pots that you see u real need that information. To make some pots for your self or sentences. To make easy understanding of what you read.	
Pumlani	To make it easier for one to get the main points or important information, and to get rid of what is not important in the information provided.	
Thembie	We summarize information so that we can be specific and say the things that we think are important or write the things that we think are important.	I found the lesson very interesting. I now know how to make a summary. I was able to complete the exercises.
Sibongile	For better understanding, in order for us to easily know or see what is going on without confusion.	
Patrick	Summarising information is very important because of briefing what has been informed from the paragraph so that any reader will easily go through the summary and understand without waste of time...to make it simple, to make it be easily understandable, so that one cannot get bored when reading it, to save time.	I always struggle to know what to put in any assignments. In the lesson we learnt what info to leave out and what to add. I still struggled with the exercises and now I know better. It helped with my assignment.
Lunga	to make it simple, to make it be easily understandable, so that one cannot get bored when reading it, to save time.	
Vilakazi	We summarize to make what we are writing or say as short and straight to the point as possible.	The lesson was use and very helpful because I now know exactly what information to put and to leave out when I am making summaries. It helped with my assignment.
Melani	To discuss briefly the important information without spending too much time on it. Make the information seem clearer and it helps us to remember or recall what we have read.	We were shown clearly how to make a summary. There were things I didn't know. I now know more or less how to go about making a summary.
Yasteel		
Shikaar	The main reason we summarise information is to shorten and to make what we are focusing on easier to understand.	
Dhiren	To produce a shortened coherent paragraph of information, that is much more easily understandable because it is in your own words.	

Appendix 14

C.H. Miller and C.J. Palenik, 1998. *Infection Control and Management of Hazardous Materials for the Dental Team*, 2nd ed. Mosby, USA.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

As described in Chapter 3, the patient's mouth is the most important source of potentially pathogenic microorganisms in the dental office. Pathogenic agents may occur in the mouth as a result of four basic conditions: bloodborne diseases, oral diseases, systemic diseases with oral lesions, and respiratory diseases. The bloodborne diseases will be presented here. (Table 6-1) and the oral and respiratory diseases will be presented in Chapter 7.

BLOOBORNE PATHOGENS

Bloodborne pathogens may infect different blood cells or other tissue of the body but during infection the pathogens exist or are released into the blood or other body fluids, which may include semen, vaginal secretion, intestinal secretions, tears, mothers' milk, synovial (joint) fluid, pericardial (around the heart) fluid, amniotic fluids (surround the developing foetus), and saliva in dentistry. Because blood or other body fluids may contain the pathogens, the disease may be spread from one person to another by contact with the fluids. Thus the diseases are called bloodborne diseases. Bloodborne pathogens may enter the mouth during dental procedures that induce bleeding. Thus contact with saliva during such procedures may result in exposure to these pathogens if present. Because it is very difficult to determine if blood is actually present in saliva, saliva from all dental patients should be considered potentially infectious.

Viral Hepatitis

There are at least six hepatitis viruses that cause clinically similar diseases: hepatitis A, B, C, D, E, and G (Table 6-2). Hepatitis A and E are mainly transmitted through contaminated food and water (fecal-oral route of spread); hepatitis B, C, D, and G are bloodborne diseases usually transmitted by direct contact with infected body fluids. Hepatitis also may be caused by excessive alcohol consumption, exposure to some hazardous chemicals, and as a complication of other viral infections such as cytomegalovirus.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B, an inflammation of the liver, is a major health problem in the United States and is endemic (occurs regularly) in other parts of the world. Between 200,000 and 300,000 people are infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) each year. Approximately 10,000 will require hospitalization, approximately 250 will die of fulminant hepatitis (an overwhelming and rapidly destructive form of the disease), and approximately 15,000 will become chronic carriers of the virus. About 4,000 people die each year of hepatitis B-related cirrhosis of the liver, and an additional 800 die of related liver cancer.

Appendix 15

Selected responses from questionnaire

Question 1: Goals for reading

Goals	EFL (26)	%	EAL (36)	%	Total (62)	Total (%)
<u>Educational goals</u>						
Increase information/ knowledge	17	65.38	18	50.00	35	56.45
Obtain better understanding	9	34.62	15	41.67	24	38.71
For educational purposes	7	26.92	7	19.44	14	22.58
Learn vocabulary	7	26.92	6	16.67	13	20.97
Improve reading/speed	4	15.38	5	13.89	9	14.52
Improve language	1	3.85	4	11.11	5	8.06
<u>Casual reading</u>						
Recreational/pleasure	14	53.85	6	16.67	20	32.26
Boredom	1	3.85	1	2.78	2	3.23
Escape world	0	0	1	2.78	1	1.61
<u>Practical reasons</u>						
World/current issues	7	26.92	6	16.67	13	20.97
Communicate effectively	0	0	1	2.78	1	1.61
Help other people	0	0	1	2.78	1	1.61

Question 2: Attending to difficulty during reading

Question 2	EFL	EAL	Total
Seek assistance	17	30	47
Use dictionary	13	19	32
Read the text more than once	19	9	28
Obtain different source	1	6	7
Simplify text	5	0	5
Read aloud	1	2	3
Take a break	1	2	3
Underline words	0	1	1
Use past question papers	0	1	1
Make points	2	1	3
Use diagrams	1	0	1
Generate questions	0	1	1
Rephrase	1	0	1
Translate into mother tongue	0	1	1

Question 3a: Types of reading material

Material read	No of participants	Percentage
Newspaper	40	64.5
Magazines	38	61.29
Novels	25	40.32

Question 5a: Reading of academic material

Reading of academic material	No of participants
Never	1
Occasionally	13
Sometimes	27
Often	21

Appendix 16

Competencies that TELP test assesses

'Receptive Skills'

Detailed reading for meaning:

- at sentence level
- at discourse level

Skimming and scanning

Vocabulary:

- deriving meanings from context
- 'known' vocabulary (no context provided)
- Spelling as it impacts meaning

Understanding metaphorical expression

Extrapolation and application (drawing conclusions, or applying insights derived from texts, seeing trends)

Inferencing (understanding ideas/information in a text, implied but not explicitly stated)

Understanding relations between parts of text through devices of cohesion

Understanding the communicative function of sentences with or without explicit indicators, such as definition, exemplification, exhortation, argument/persuasion

Understanding relations between parts of text by recognizing indicators in discourse, especially for: introducing, developing, transition and conclusion of ideas; signaling relations between phenomena

Understanding the grammatical/syntactical basis of the English language

Understanding text genre (including audience, purpose, etc.)

Understanding information presented visually (graphs, tables, diagrams, pictures, maps, flow-charts)

Separating the essential from the non-essential:

- main idea from supporting detail
- statement from example
- fact from opinion
- proposition from its argument
- classifying and categorizing

Understanding the importance of 'own voice' (including 'ownership' of idea) and/or creativity of thought and expression

'Productive skills'

Paraphrasing (including disambiguation)

Presenting information visually

Developing and signaling own voice

Summarising

Description: ideas, phenomena, process and change of state

Exposition: argument, comparison and contrast, classification and categorization

[adapted from Yeld, 2001]